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September 2001

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EXCLUSIVE RING INTERVIEW

HEAVYWEIGHT KING HASIM RAHMAN

"Nobody's Taking My Titles!"

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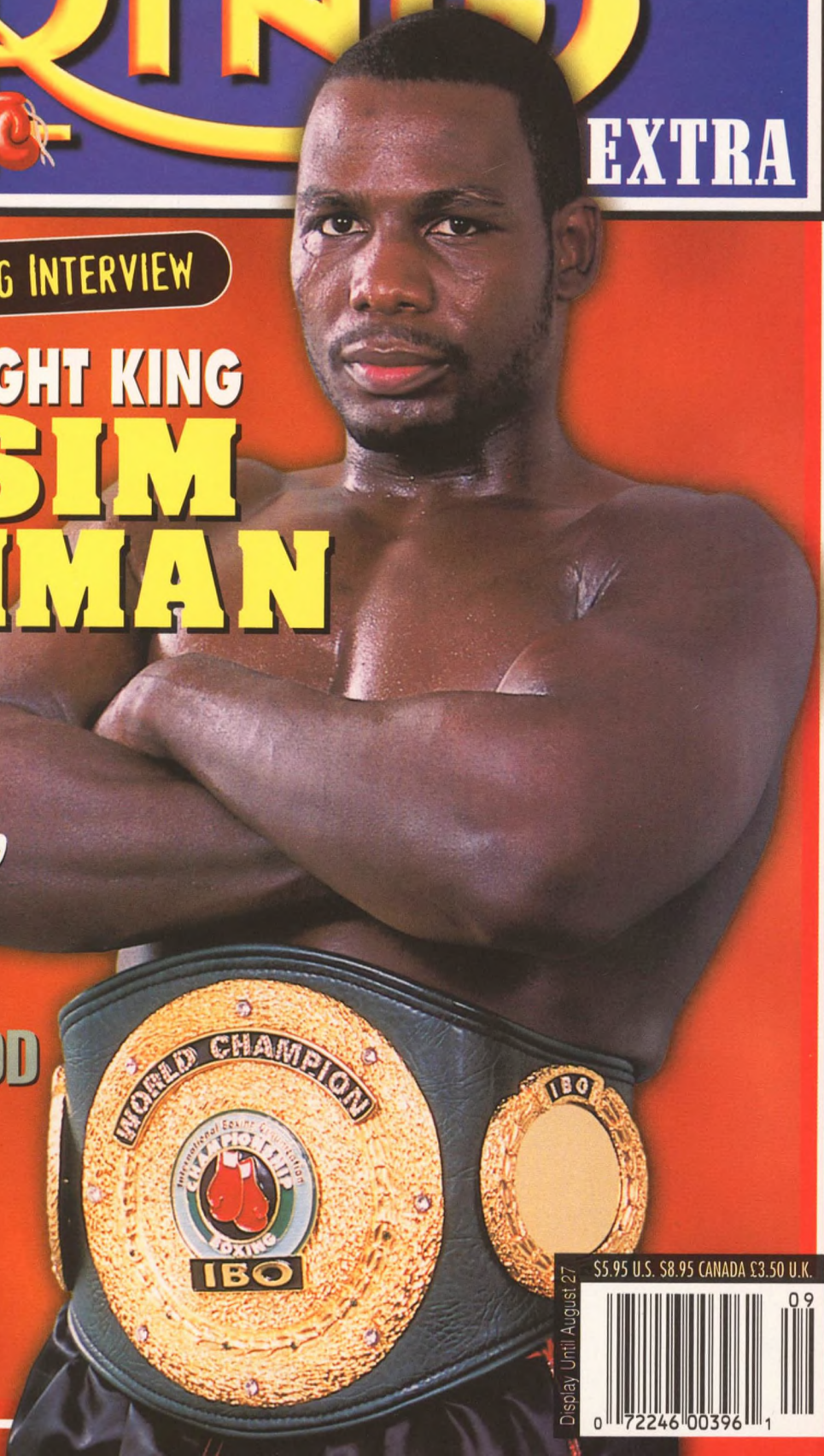

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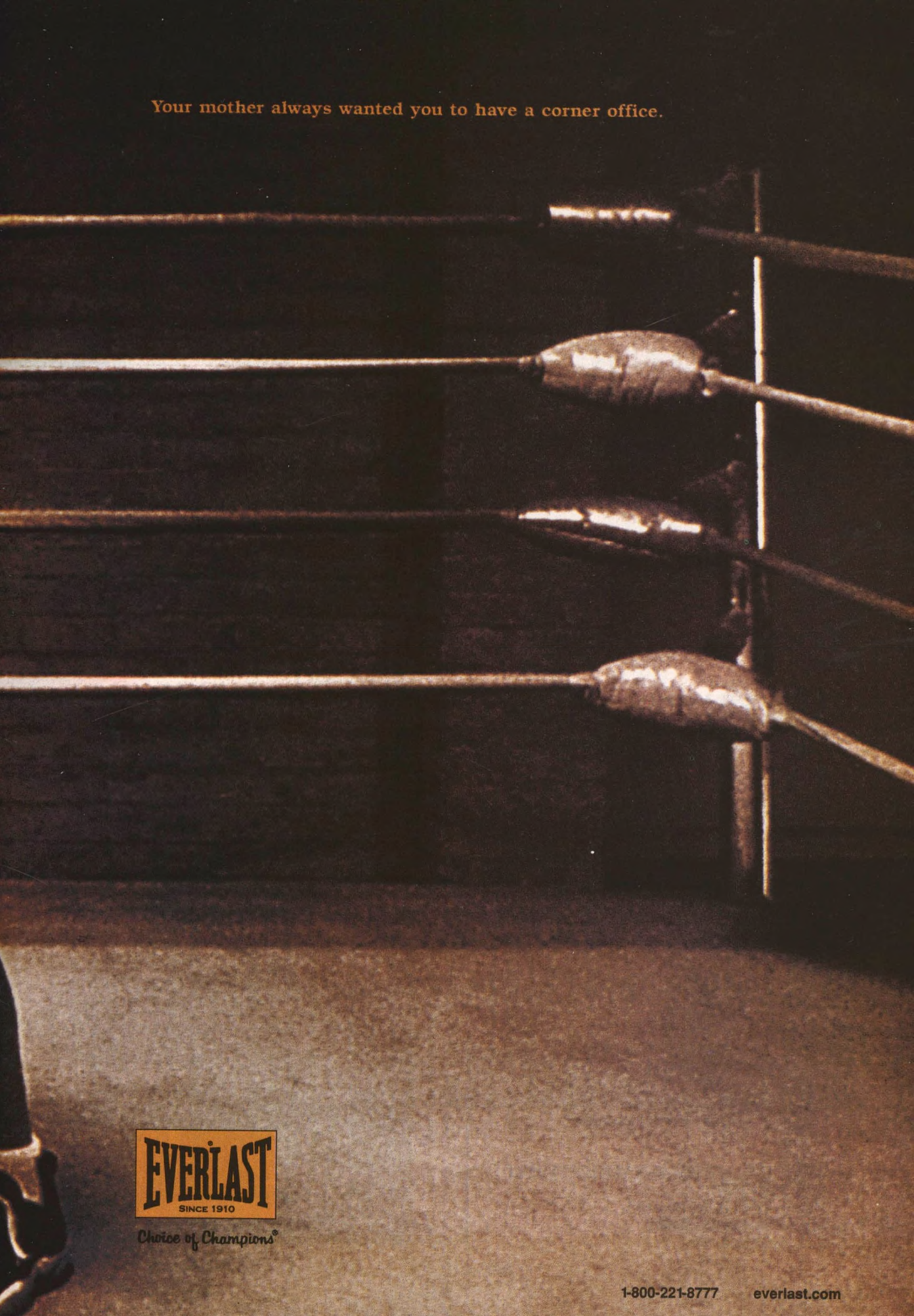
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The RING EXTRA

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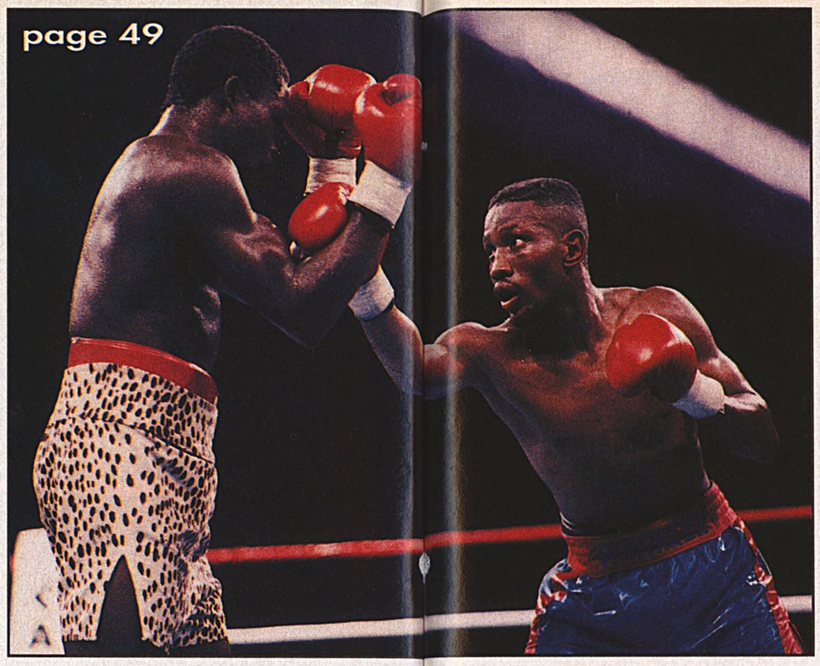

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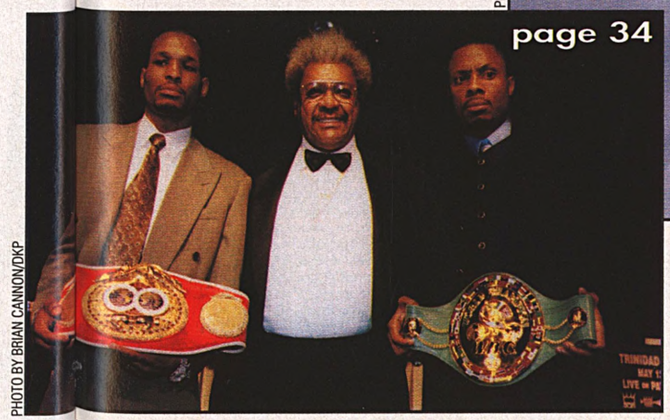

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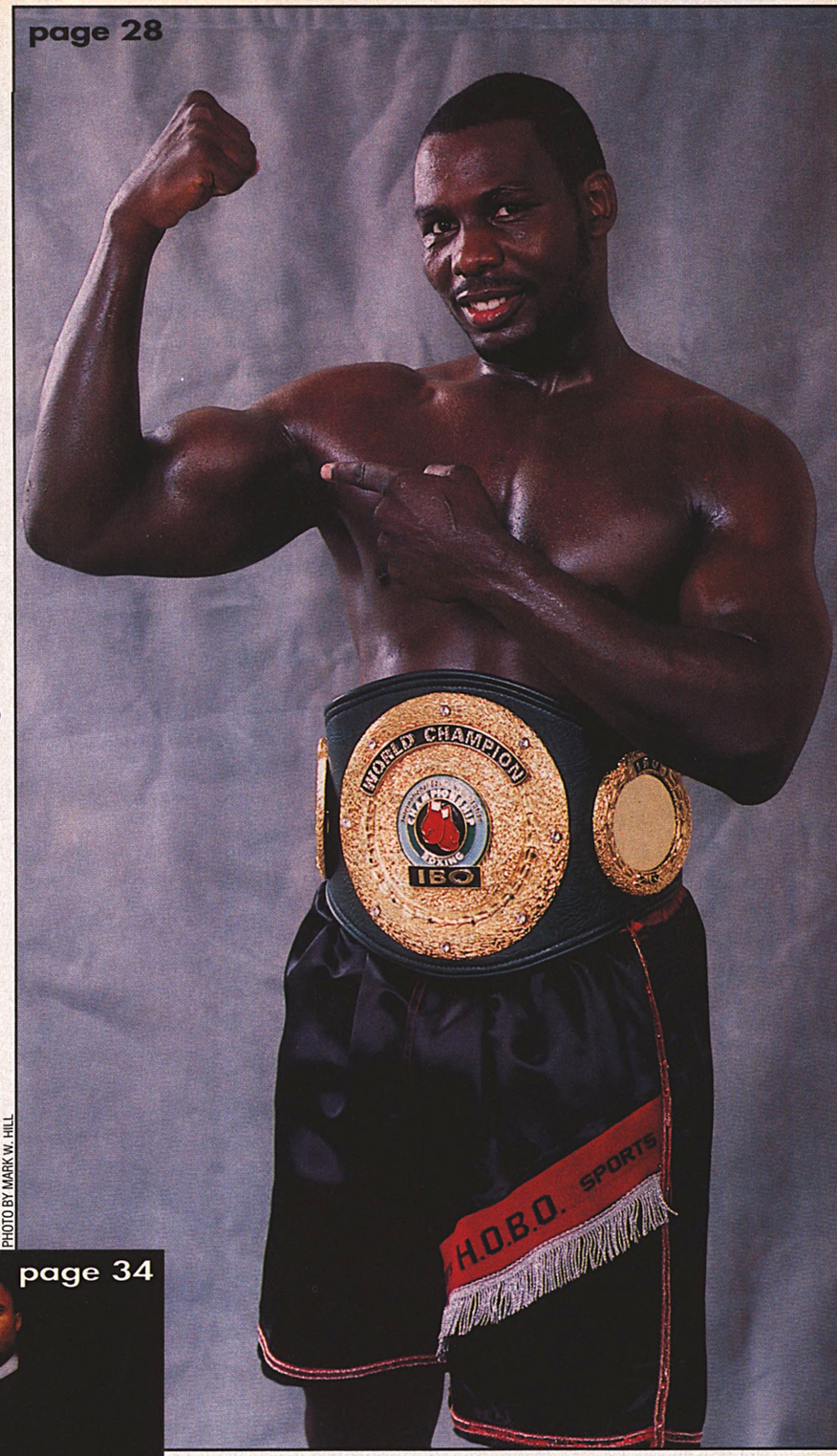

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Cover: *Hasim Rahman by Mark W. Hill*
Cover Design: *Joseph Kalman*

RINGSIDE

In the rush of euphoria that followed Hasim Rahman's one-punch knockout of Lennox Lewis, it seemed that a new era had dawned for heavyweight boxing, an era free of the contractual and legal constraints that have so often delayed or prevented attractive matches from being made. The HBO vs. Showtime deadlock that had obstructed a bout between Lewis and Mike Tyson had been broken by the same right hand Rahman used to end Lewis' reign. Although Rahman's contract for the Lewis fight had a rematch clause, he retained the right to have an interim bout, which basically made him a free agent, at liberty to fight whomever he wanted next, on whatever television network he wanted.

The fight everybody, including Rahman, immediately started talking about was Tyson-Rahman. When I interviewed Hasim for this issue's cover story, he told me flat-out that he wanted Tyson next. "The Rock" was still of the same mind the following week when he visited THE RING's editorial offices for a photo shoot, and requested that he be quoted on the cover, saying, "Tyson, you're next!"

For a change, everything seemed to be falling into place in a way that would benefit the sport and please the fans. But we should have known better. This is, after all, boxing. With stunning quickness, the powers that be recovered from the state of shock Rahman's unexpected victory had knocked them into, and launched a frenzied power struggle that threw everything into a state of confusion once again.

HBO, which foolishly failed to sign a long-term agreement with Rahman prior to the Lewis fight, made a huge offer for a Lewis rematch. Showtime countered with an equally impressive sum to fight Tyson. Then Don King joined the bidding war with his own proposal, which included a lucrative fight on the John Ruiz-Evander Holyfield III card in China and then a match with the winner.

Further complicating the situation are a pair of lawsuits. David Tua, who the IBF had stupidly made its number-one contender, sued the organization to enforce a rule forbidding rematch clauses. Tyson, the WBC's mandatory contender, sued the WBC for the same reason, but dropped his suit when the Mexico-based organization agreed not to sanction a Rahman-Lewis rematch.

As we went to press, King had apparently outflanked the competition and signed Rahman, but Cedric Kushner, who had promoted Rahman going into the Lewis match, is sure to fight back with a massive lawsuit. Additional suits from other parties are sure to follow. How it all shakes out in the end remains to be seen, but it sure doesn't look like we're going to get Rahman-Tyson next.

As the mad scramble for his services intensified, it became obvious that we weren't going to be able to use the cover line Rahman had originally asked for, so we gave him a call. How about "Nobody's taking my titles" he suggested, which was fine with us. What's not fine with us is that greed and a lust for power has once again won out over what's best for boxing.

It's tough to criticize Rahman for taking the money over the glory; he has his family and future to think of, and who knows, maybe he'll get around to fighting Tyson eventually. But I can't help missing the great feeling that surrounded boxing in the immediate aftermath of Rahman's victory over Lewis. For a week or so, the Sweet Science seemed to have a fresh start, an opportunity to do things in a manner that put the sport before individual interests. But what had seemed so straightforward a few weeks ago has degenerated into business as usual—the same sort of business that has hurt the game so many times in the past.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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ROUND ONE

STUMBLING INTO THE SUNSET

There have been sadder endings for boxing's all-time greats. The beatings Muhammad Ali sustained in his final fights were troubling, and when Joe Louis was knocked out by Rocky Marciano, it seemed unfair that such a great champion would be given such a sendoff. Most recently, Sugar Ray Leonard took a merciless beating before he got the message from Father Time.

So when you think about it, even though Pernell Whitaker lost to a journeyman who probably wouldn't have been qualified to spit shine his protective cup when he was at his best, the way he went out wasn't that bad. He broke his shoulder and wasn't able to continue, but he didn't take a beating or actually get knocked out. It could've been worse.

PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

Whitaker's career ends on a sad note

And it almost was. After leaving Lake Tahoe, Nevada, where he lost via fourth-round stoppage on April 27 to Carlos Bojorquez, Whitaker, 37, was taken to Virginia Beach General Hospital on April 30 after his girlfriend, Alinka Pollock, called 911 to report that he was having a seizure. Pollock kicked down the bathroom door to get to Whitaker, who was lying on the floor in the fetal position, shaking, she said. Pollock told the 911 operator that she feared that Whitaker was having a drug overdose. When asked by the operator what drug Whitaker might have taken, Pollock said: "Possibly cocaine."

A few days later, Whitaker—who had tested positive for cocaine twice during his career, in 1997 and '98—refuted the accusation that he was using cocaine and instead attributed his condition to mixing painkillers for his shoulder with alcohol. The Nevada State Athletic Commission tested Whitaker before and after the fight, and executive director Marc Ratner said he was clean for the fight, but whether or not he had any illegal substances in his system once he returned home was neither confirmed nor denied by the Virginia hospital.

Whitaker, who hadn't fought in 26 months prior to the Bojorquez loss (since his loss to Felix Trinidad) has announced his retirement from boxing and requested that he be left alone once and for all.

"I'm not a bad person. I'm not a monster," he told the *Virginian-Pilot*. "It's just something bad that happened. I don't want to stir up any conflict. There's no drama. I'd appreciate it if people just let this die and let me live my life."

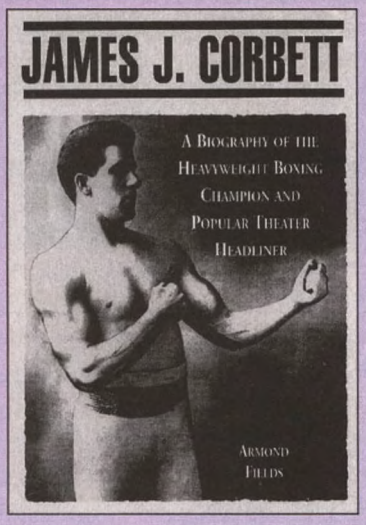
Leading up to the fight with Bojorquez, Whitaker vehemently steered clear of any questions regarding his past transgressions and said his long layoff had nothing to do with alcohol or substance abuse. He still has yet to admit that he tested positive for cocaine in the past because he actually took cocaine. But the indications of trouble could be seen as recently as January 27, when Whitaker was seen staggering through a hotel lobby after attending an HBO card at The Theater at Madison Square Garden.

While Whitaker, 40-4-1 (17), can dance around questions about his substance problems the way he has done so many world-class opponents in his heyday, longtime manager Lou Duva hinted there was something amiss.

"Right now, he just needs a lot of help," said Duva, who has offered Whitaker a position as a trainer with his promotional company, Duva Boxing. "A lot of medical help, a lot of mental help. He's got to make up his mind what he wants to do with the rest of his life. We'd like to help him, but if he doesn't help himself, we got nothing."

—Johnnie Whitehead

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF



Author Armond Fields is a "social historian specializing in popular theater." But fight fans wary of finding in *James J. Corbett: A Biography Of The Heavyweight Champion And Popular Theater Headliner* (McFarland & Company, 260 pages, softcover, $45) too much greasepaint and not enough rosin, too much "Gentleman Jack" (Corbett's first major theatrical production) and not enough "Gentleman Jim" (his boxing nickname, which he came to abhor), will be more than pleasantly surprised once they overcome their sticker shock. Priced like a glitzy coffee table tome, Fields' 7 x 10 book is thorough, scintillating, and enlightening.

"You have to keep up with the times," Corbett once explained when asked why he'd gone from the famous pompadour hairstyle worn in his fighting days to the slicked-down, patent-leather look of later years. That may have been the only matter in which the second heavyweight titlist of the modern era followed the crowd. Otherwise, Fields amply demonstrates, Corbett was a trendsetter in his own right. This was especially true between the ropes, where the scientific boxing that let the air out of John L. Sullivan lifted the sport to new public respectability, and also in front of the footlights, where Corbett's charm and urbaneness did the same for the entertainment industry.

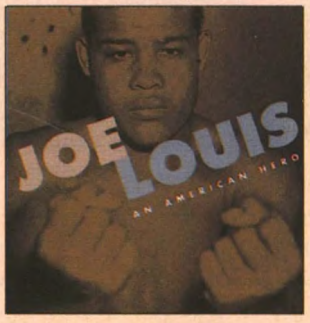
The author treats more seriously than most the reports that Corbett abandoned or forfeited his boxing title several times before he lost it in the ring to Fitzsimmons, and in one confused paragraph leading up to Corbett's successful defense against Charlie Mitchell calls him both champion and ex-champion. But that's a rare blip on an otherwise cloudless screen. Anyone with an impression of the dandified Corbett as a priggish stuffed-shirt will be disabused of it reading about the comedy routines in which he delighted in being the butt of jokes, some of which, their politically incorrectness aside, are still laugh-out-loud funny.

Interspersed throughout Fields' outstanding text are rare photos of Corbett the boxer and actor, and enhancing the entire package is a "Performance Chronology" in the back that includes his bouts and stage appearances.

Since he thought Gentleman Jim a demeaning appellation, the subject of this highly recommended biography probably wouldn't think much of "Lucky Jim," either. But Fields' achievement makes it applicable in this case, and the old vaudeville interlocutor himself would likely be speechless with delight.

—Pete Ehrmann

BLAST FROM THE PAST



Can you imagine Christina Aguilera wiggling her way through a song about Hasim Rahman or Boyz II Men warbling an ode to Sugar Shane Mosley? Sounds pretty farfetched, right? But back in the 1930s and '40s, some of the most popular singers and musicians of the day—Cab Calloway, Count Basey, Paul Robeson, Memphis Minnie, Sonny Boy Williamson—recorded songs about Joe Louis. In fact, according to William H. Higgins Jr., professor of Afro-American studies at Indiana University, more songs have been written about Louis than any other athlete in history.

That bygone era has been brought back to life by Rounder Records, which recently released a CD of Louis songs entitled *Joe Louis: An American Hero*. The material ranges from Tin Pan Alley tunes to calypso, gospel, and blues. The songs trace Louis' career, and in some cases feature descriptions of his fights: "We all heard about Primo Canary [Carnera], they thought he was so good. But Joe started chopping on his head like a farmer chopping wood."

There's all sorts of oddities among the 17 cuts on the CD, including a fire and brimstone sermon by Rev. J.M. Gates called "Joe Louis' Wrist And His Fist," and "Louis-Schmeling Fight" by The Lion and Atilla, a calypso team from Trinidad. "Joe Louis Is A Fightin' Man" by The Dixieaires, a gospel number sung to the tune of "Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho," is a toe-tapping treat, and Robeson's voice on "King Joe" is as powerful as any punch "The Brown Bomber" ever threw.

An American Hero isn't for every boxing fan, but for those who enjoy the popular music of the period and/or want to enhance their understanding of how profound a role Louis played in American history, it's a treasure.

—Nigel Collins

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
4-14-01	**Bernard Hopkins W 12 Keith Holmes**	**HBO**	**WBC/IBF m**	**A+**	**B+**	**C**
You have to love Hopkins; he was still trying for the kayo in the last minute of the last round						
4-20-01	Sherwin Davis KO 3 Dante Craig	ESPN2	jm	C	B+	B
Craig first 2000 Olympian to get hammered; he won't be the last						
4-20-01	Bronco McKart W 10 Michael Lerma	ESPN2	jm	C+	C+	C
Looks like McKart can beat just about every second-tier 154-pounder except Winky Wright						
4-21-01	**Lehlo Ledwaba W 12 Carlos Contreras**	**HBO**	**IBF jf**	**A-**	**C+**	**C+**
Ledwaba impressive, but not overly so, in American TV debut						
4-21-01	**Hasim Rahman KO 5 Lennox Lewis**	**HBO**	**WBC/IBF h**	**A+**	**B**	**B+**
Lewis blows the payday of a lifetime vs. Tyson; does anyone feel sorry for him?						
4-22-01	Ernesto Zepeda KO 5 Justin Juuko	FOXSN	l	C+	B+	C+
Either Juuko has completely fallen apart or Zepeda's a guy we want to keep an eye on						
4-22-01	Hector Camacho Jr. KO 2 Larry LaCoursiere	FOXSN	w	C+	D+	C-
Has there ever been a guy who looks less like a fighter than LaCoursiere does?						
4-27-01	Eric Kirkland KO 8 Willie Chapman	ESPN2	h	C-	D	D
Hey, Nevada, explain to us again why Adolpho Washington was dropped as Kirkland's opponent						
4-27-01	Carlos Bojorquez KO 4 Pernell Whitaker	ESPN2	jm	B-	C+	D+
Shoulder or no, "Sweet Pea" was taking a lot of right hands; we're glad he's decided to move on						
4-28-01	Bradley Pryce W 12 Jason Hall	Show	l	C-	B+	B-
Decent fight for a couple of novices; Pryce fairly skilled, and Hall as tough as they come						
4-28-01	Joe Calzaghe KO 1 Mario Veit	Show	sm	B	C-	B
Call us crazy, but maybe Calzaghe can take Roy Jones a few rounds						
4-28-01	Julio Diaz KO 9 Justo Sencion	HBO	l	B	A	B
Crunching bodyshots break down Sencion; Diaz an outstanding prospect						
4-28-01	**Andrew Lewis W 12 Larry Marks**	**HBO**	**WBA w**	**A-**	**C+**	**C-**
"Six Heads" wins all but the first round and impresses no one in the process						
5-4-01	Gary Balleto W 6 Freddy Cruz	ESPN2	l	D+	B-	C
Veteran Cruz slick enough to last the distance but little else; Balleto strong but crude						
5-4-01	Julian Wheeler W 8 Israel Cardona	ESPN2	l	C+	B+	C+
Has Cardona fallen a long way or was he always just an average fighter?						
5-4-01	Thomas Tate W 12 Fernando Zuniga	ESPN2	sm	B-	C+	D-
If this wasn't so damned boring, maybe someone would have noticed Zuniga getting some work done late						
5-5-01	Juan Lazcano KO 11 John-John Molina	HBO	l	B+	B+	B+
If referee Jerry McKenzie was waiting for a last-minute reprieve from the governor, he was in the wrong state						
5-5-01	Fernando Vargas KO 6 Wilfredo Rivera	HBO	m	A	B	B
The biggest surprise was how quickly Rivera folded when Vargas started landing						
5-5-01	Alex Trujillo KO 7 Emmanuel Clottey	Show	jw	C	C-	B
Trujillo an interesting prospect, and Elmo Adolph and Jerry McKenzie are polar opposites						
5-5-01	**Joel Casamayor W 12 Edwin Santana**	**Show**	**WBA jl**	**A-**	**D+**	**D**
If a good defense and virtually no offense won fights, Santana would be Joe Louis						
5-6-01	Alejandro Gonzalez Tech. Draw 10 A. Ramirez	Uni	jl	B-	C+	B-
Gonzalez early, Ramirez late; good fight until headbutt opens up Ramirez and ends it						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

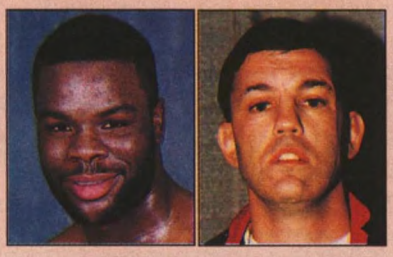
(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

GRANT ENTERS ATLAS' WORLD

Michael Grant plans to get back into the ring this summer, possibly on the July 21 HBO card headlined by Shane Mosley. But this will not be the same Michael Grant who was last seen stretched out on the canvas at Madison Square Garden on April 29, 2000, courtesy of a Lennox Lewis right hand. There will be major changes, inside the ring and out, for the 6'7", 250-pound heavyweight contender.



Grant and Atlas: A winning team?

The biggest difference outside the ring for Grant is a promotional contract he signed with Cedric Kushner Promotions on April 26, to be negotiated on a per-fight basis. But the more significant change is in the ring, where Grant's corner will feature a new face. Teddy Atlas, the veteran trainer and ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* analyst, will replace Don Turner as his chief second. After a brief tryout, Atlas made his decision on April 30.

"I've been deciding on this for about two or three weeks," Atlas said. "We did a trial thing in Manhattan, and I wanted to see what Grant could and couldn't do. It took me a little while to say yes. I'm just a little concerned with committing myself to a fighter, unless they have a commitment and understanding of what I want. He's going to have to understand he has to act like a professional and allow himself to become a professional. That means no entourages, none of those things that buffer and protect them.

"You could see Michael's a good kid, he has manners, and that's part of the reason I said yes. I want to work with a kid who wants to improve."

Turner and Grant parted ways after the Lewis debacle. No one can question Grant's heart, which was apparent when he rose from three knockdowns against Lewis, but there have been doubts among boxing insiders about Grant's willingness to box. Grant wants to refute those concerns, and feels the first step in that process was securing Atlas as his trainer.

"Being a pro to Teddy is not just signing your name on the dotted line," said the affable Grant. "You have to dedicate yourself to boxing. If his fighter is not 100 percent focused, he's not going to commit and train that fighter.

"I absolutely want to box. I spent a lot of my life and career boxing raw. I've gotten across off natural skills and reaction. I want the knowledge Mr. Atlas has."

—Joe Santoliquito

A STERN CHALLENGE

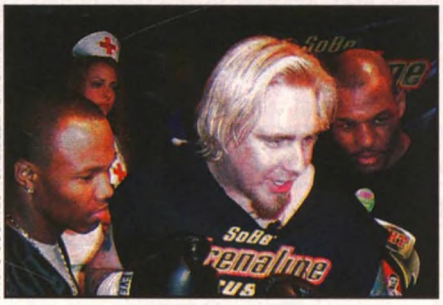


PHOTO COURTESY OF DIBELLA ENTERTAINMENT

Judah and Hopkins lead Cabbie to the ring

On a weekend when the city of New York hosted two world title fights, the boxing match that garnered the most attention in the Big Apple and nationwide was about as far removed from a world title fight as you could get. At the WWF New York theme restaurant on April 27, the *Howard Stern Show* presented a grudge match between Crazy Cabbie and Angry Black, two Stern regulars whose verbal feud recently escalated into a physical challenge. With a host of boxing luminaries playing a role in the proceedings, the 295-pound Cabbie and the 196-pound Angry Black went at it for five two-minute rounds, displaying technique that made Jacqui Frazier-Lyde look like Sugar Ray Robinson, but enough heart to make the rumble entertaining.

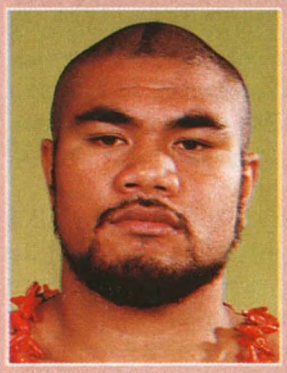
On hand for "The Contention For Attention" were Michael Buffer, who served as ring announcer; world champions Bernard Hopkins and Zab Judah, who were in Cabbie's corner; former champs Hector Camacho Sr., Arturo Gatti, and Mark Breland, who judged the bout; and Gerry Cooney and Iran Barkley, who helped lend expert analysis to the not-so-boxing-savvy Stern crew. Pro wrestlers "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin and Triple-H were also on hand, as were members of Stern's "Wack Pack" such as Hank the Angry Drunken Dwarf, Fred the Elephant Boy, and the bizarre Beetlejuice, who was dressed—quite hilariously—as Don King.

The fight itself—contested with 16-ounce gloves and headgear—was ugly but amusing. Cabbie dominated the action from the outset, using his size to bull Angry Black into the ropes and maul him with clubbing shots. But the obese former drug abuser lost a point for a low blow in round one, and another point in the third for holding, plus Angry Black scored a flash knockdown with a right hand in the second round. Cabbie surprised observers with his stamina, since many predicted he wouldn't have the wind to go two rounds. He was clearly the stronger man at the finish, but the point deductions and the knockdown negated his general dominance, and the result was a split draw. After the fight, the two fighters embraced and buried the hatchet.

"These guys are getting along now," Stern marveled. "Fighting really does settle a lot of things."

—Eric Raskin

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Tua: Couldn't save tiger victim

Though **David Tua** is best known to many for his not-so-heroic effort against **Lennox Lewis** last November, the Samoan heavyweight did his best to be heroic when he bore witness to a horrific incident in Las Vegas in late-March. Tiger trainer **Eric Bloom** was being attacked by a Bengal tiger that Tua had posed with days earlier, and after hearing Bloom's screams, Tua quickly called an ambulance. Once the tiger was subdued, Tua got some towels and applied pressure to the bite wounds on Bloom's neck, but his effort was in vain. Bloom, 25, died from loss of blood ... Former junior middleweight champion **Fernando Vargas** pled no-contest in early-May to assault charges stemming from a July '99 incident in Santa Barbara, California. Sentencing is set for August 24, and it is believed the no-contest plea will spare Vargas jail time... It was revealed in late-March that junior welterweight fringe contender **Emanuel Burton** had tested positive for marijuana following his February 16 win over Mike Griffith. Burton faces a possible suspension and fine, the extent of which had not been determined as of press time ... Three-division former champion **Julio Cesar Chavez** is trying to avoid taking a damaging shot to the wallet from the IRS, which is seeking $2.39-million in 1996 back taxes. Chavez is fighting the ruling in court ... Former European 130-pound champion **Pierre Lorcy**, the brother of former WBA lightweight champ **Julien Lorcy**, was sentenced to 10 months in prison in early-April for jewel theft. The Frenchman is also facing the far more serious charge of homicide, for the murder of an 89-year-old man in '94 ... It's a good thing **Mills Lane** has gotten involved in promoting, because his gig as a TV judge is up. *Judge Mills Lane* was canceled by UPN in early-April ... In other television news, the HBO documentary *Ali-Frazier I: One Nation Divisible* won a Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcasting and Cable in late-March ... The inaugural Ringside National Amateur Championship tournament is coming up on Labor Day weekend. For details, check out www.ringside.com ... Several deaths to report this month, starting with **Ben Bentley**, who died in Chicago in early-May at the age of 81. Bentley was a well-known boxing ring announcer and the original host of *The Sportswriters* ... There was a ring death in Australia in early-April, when bantamweight **Ahmed Popal**, fighting professionally for just the third time, suffered a head injury in a bout against **Tony Pappa** and died three days later. Popal, 30, reportedly tumbled to the canvas in a clinch, banged his head, and never regained consciousness ... **Eddie Melo**, a Canadian middleweight and light heavyweight contender in the early-'80s, was shot and killed outside an Ontario sports bar in early-April. He was 40 years old ... **Earl Monroe**, a once-promising Alabama middleweight who compiled a 10-2-4 (5) record between '95 and '98, was shot to death after a fight in a parking lot in late-April. The 27-year-old Monroe, who compiled over 200 wins in an excellent amateur career, was best known for being knocked out by **Antwun Echols** in a fight for the USBA middleweight title.

Lane: TV series canned

THE PUNCHLINES

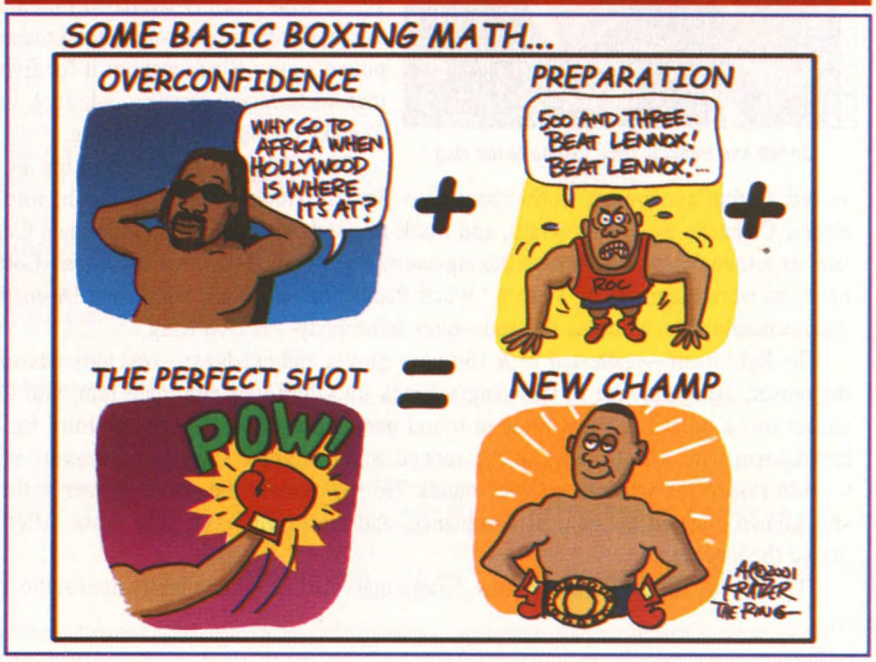
"The shorter the fight goes, the less chance George Foreman has to open his hamburger mouth."

—Bernard Hopkins, on HBO color analyst Foreman, prior to his fight with Keith Holmes

"You have done the seemingly impossible by making [Bob] Arum a sympathetic figure."

—*LA Times* boxing writer Steve Springer, on Oscar De La Hoya's comments about winning in court against "one of the biggest Jews to come out of Harvard"

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended May 7, 2001)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. SHANE MOSLEY
   Welterweight
2. FELIX TRINIDAD
   Junior Middleweight
3. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
   Junior Lightweight
4. ROY JONES
   Light Heavyweight
5. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
   Featherweight
6. OSCAR DE LA HOYA
   Welterweight
7. BERNARD HOPKINS
   Middleweight
8. NASEEM HAMED
   Featherweights
9. RICARDO LOPEZ
   Junior Flyweight
10. ERIK MORALES
    Featherweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Hasim Rahman zooms from eighth to first on the strength of his fifth-round kayo of Lennox Lewis, who is now number two. Everybody else is bumped down one spot to accommodate "The Rock's" ascension.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Joe Calzaghe (second last issue) and Sven Ottke (formerly first) trade places due to the superior quality of Calzaghe's recent work. Incarcerated Davey Hilton (seventh last issue) has been stripped of the WBC belt following his conviction on sexual assault charges. Hilton's exit allows Dingaan Thobela, Glenn Catley, and James Butler to each advance one spot. Back on board at number 10 is Mads Larsen.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Keith Holmes falls from third to fifth after losing the WBC title to number-one rated Bernard Hopkins, which also pushes up Armand Krajnc (fourth last issue) and Antwun Echols (fifth last issue) one place each. Howard Eastman jumps from ninth to seventh after stopping Robert McCracken. Eastman's promotion causes Syd Vanderpool and Carl Daniels to drop one slot each.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Ike Quartey (sixth last issue) exits because he has not fought in more than a year. His departure lifts Bronco McKart, Yory Boy Campas, Alex Bunema, and J.C. Candelo one spot each, and makes room for Shibata Flores at number 10.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Wilfredo Rivera (fifth last issue) indicated he would retire following his TKO loss to Fernando Vargas at middleweight, and has been removed from the 147-pound ratings. Thomas Damgaard, Kofi Jantuah, Daniel Santos, James Page, and Rafael Pineda improve one place each due to Rivera's removal. Shannan Taylor fills the vacancy at number 10.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: John-John Molina (ninth last issue) is gone following his TKO loss to Juan Lazcano at lightweight. This boosts Ben Tackie from 10th to ninth and clears space for Hector Camacho Jr. at number 10.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Lazcano debuts at number nine, pushing Cesar Bazan (formerly ninth) down to 10, and Gilberto Serrano (10th last issue) out.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Diego Corrales (fourth last issue) is gone after being sentenced to two years in prison for domestic violence. Corrales' removal elevates everybody formerly rated below him one slot each and makes room for unbeaten Tontcho Tontchev at number 10.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Carlos Contreras (sixth last issue) slips to ninth after losing a 12-round decision to IBF champ Lehlo Ledwaba, who stays at second. Antonio Cermeno, Oscar Larios, and Michael Brodie all climb one position each to sixth, seventh, and eighth, respectively.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Yokthai Sithoar (seventh last issue) is gone due to the fact that he has been inactive for more than a year. Samson Toyota-Thailand (eighth last issue), Adonis Rivas (formerly ninth), and Mauricio Pastrana (10th last issue) all move up one spot each, while Diego Morales is back at number 10.

FLYWEIGHTS: No charges.

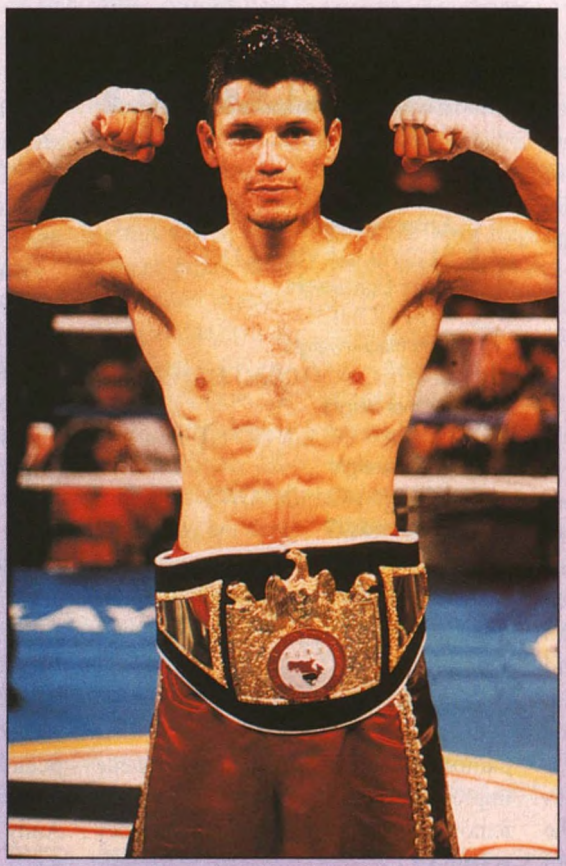
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Former IBF minimumweight champ Zolani Petelo debuts at number six after outpointing Roberto Gomez. Also debuting at 108 pounds is Nelson Dieppa, who recently scored a sensational one-punch kayo of Andy Tabanas. Fahlan Sakkreerin (formerly ninth) and Jose Garcia (10th last issue) are forced out by the two newcomers.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Chana Porpaoin (fifth last issue) leaps to number one after regaining the WBA belt from Keitaro Hoshino, who slides from second to fourth. Porpaoin's elevation causes Jose Aguirre (first last issue) to slip to second. New IBF champ Roberto Leyva enters at number three after outpointing Daniel Reyes for the vacant belt. Hiroshi Nakajima (10th last issue) exits.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Lewis (seventh last issue) is gone following his defeat to Rahman. Hopkins improves from eighth to seventh on the basis of his win over Holmes. Lewis' departure pushes up Naseem Hamed (ninth last issue) and Ricardo Lopez (10th last issue). Erik Morales rejoins the elite group at number 10. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended May 7, 2001



Juan Lazcano crashed the lightweight rankings with his 11th-round kayo of John-John Molina

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD *35-2 (WBC/IBF Champ)*
2. **LENNOX LEWIS** England *38-2-1*
3. **MIKE TYSON** Catskill, NY *48-3*
4. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine *36-1*
5. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA *37-4 (WBA Champ)*
6. **KIRK JOHNSON** Canada *31-0-1*
7. **DAVID TUA** New Zealand *38-2*
8. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA *37-5-1*
9. **MOUNT WHITAKER** Mission Hills, CA *23-1*
10. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI *32-2*

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Puerto Rico *39-0 (WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA *21-1*
3. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL *41-3*
4. **HARRY SIMON** Namibia *21-0*
5. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO** Spain *51-4 (WBC Champ)*
6. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI *43-3*
7. **YORY BOY CAMPAS** Mexico *77-4*
8. **ALEX BUNEMA** Dallas, TX *19-2-1*
9. **J.C. CANDELO** Denver, CO *23-3-3*
10. **SHIBATA FLORES** Mexico *42-8*

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico *53-3*
2. **NASEEM HAMED** England *35-1*
3. **ERIK MORALES** Mexico *40-0 (WBC Champ)*
4. **GUTY ESPADAS** Mexico *33-3*
5. **DERRICK GAINER** Pensacola, FL *37-5 (WBA Champ)*
6. **FRANKIE TOLEDO** Paterson, NJ *40-5-1 (IBF Champ)*
7. **JOHNNY TAPIA** Albuquerque, NM *49-2-2*
8. **MBULELO BOTILE** South Africa *27-2*
9. **FRED NORWOOD** St. Louis, MO *37-1-1*
10. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico *35-2*

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **BONES ADAMS** Henderson, KY *41-3-3 (WBA Champ)*
2. **LEHLO LEDWABA** South Africa *33-1-1 (IBF Champ)*
3. **WILLIE JORRIN** Sacramento, CA *28-0 (WBC Champ)*
4. **MANNY PACQUAIO** Philippines *32-2*
5. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ** Mexico *28-1-2*
6. **ANTONIO CERMENO** Venezuela *38-3*
7. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico *40-3-1*
8. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England *30-1*
9. **CARLOS CONTRERAS** Mexico *17-5-2*
10. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA** Venezuela *18-2-1*

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN** Cincinnati, OH *22-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **PAULIE AYALA** Ft. Worth, TX *32-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand *29-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **ADAN VARGAS** Mexico *36-2-1*
5. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark *49-2*
6. **JORGE LACIERVA** Mexico *18-3-3*
7. **RICARDO BARAJAS** Mexico *22-1-1*
8. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ** Panama *19-3-1*
9. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico *24-3*
10. **HUGO DIANZO** Mexico *26-6-1*

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany 32-0 (WBC Champ)
2. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 46-3 (WBA Champ)
3. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 28-0 (IBF Champ)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 39-12-1
5. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina 31-3-1
6. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England 28-5
7. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS**
   Pensacola, FL 34-5-1
8. **JAMES TONEY**
   Las Vegas, NV 61-4-2
9. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France 42-2
10. **LOUIS AZILLE**
    Jersey City, NJ 15-0-2

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL 44-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 44-0
3. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA 19-1-1
4. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX 41-6-1
5. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 40-3
6. **CHRIS JOHNSON**
   Canada 26-2-1
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 27-0
8. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 17-1
9. **GREG WRIGHT**
   Bronx, NY 18-6-2
10. **DERRICK HARMON**
    Chicago, IL 20-2

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 31-0
2. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 22-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France 38-2-1
4. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 23-1-1 (WBA Champ)
5. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 36-7
6. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX 40-6
7. **DINGAAN THOBELA**
   South Africa 40-8-2
8. **JAMES BUTLER**
   Bronx, NY 18-1
9. **GLENN CATLEY**
   England 26-4
10. **MADS LARSEN**
    Denmark 37-1

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA 39-2-1 (IBF/WBC Champ)
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 32-1-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden 24-0
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 24-4-1
5. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. 35-3
6. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France 31-4-1
7. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 32-0
8. **SYD VANDERPOOL**
   Canada 28-2
9. **CARL DANIELS**
   St. Louis, MO 47-3-1
10. **ANTONIO PERUGINO**
    Italy 16-0

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 37-0 (WBC Champ)
2. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA 33-2
3. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana 21-0-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA 31-0
5. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 24-0
6. **KOFI JANTUAH**
   Ghana 21-0
7. **DANIEL SANTOS**
   Puerto Rico 24-2-1
8. **JAMES PAGE**
   Pittsburg, CA 25-4
9. **RAFAEL PINEDA**
   Colombia 34-3
10. **SHANNAN TAYLOR**
    Australia 28-1-1

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia 26-1-1 (WBA/WBC Champ)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 26-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 47-3
4. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 34-3
5. **ENER JULIO**
   Colombia 21-3
6. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL 23-1
7. **TERRONN MILLETT**
   St. Louis, MO 23-2-1
8. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA 35-10
9. **BEN TACKIE**
   Ghana 22-2
10. **HECTOR CAMACHO JR**
    Puerto Rico 32-0

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico 42-4-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 30-2-1
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA 32-0 (IBF Champ)
4. **TAKANORI HATAKEYAMA**
   Japan 24-1-3 (WBA Champ)
5. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN 36-5-1
6. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 32-0
7. **COLIN DUNNE**
   England 32-1
8. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX 42-5-2
9. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 27-2-1
10. **CESAR BAZAN**
    Mexico 38-4-1

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 25-0 (WBC Champ)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 25-0 (WBA Champ)
3. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 29-0
4. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV 19-1 (IBF Champ)
5. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 34-1
6. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea 22-1-1
7. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia 13-2-1
8. **JOHN BROWN**
   Atlantic City, NJ 23-8
9. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ**
   Mexico 45-4-1
10. **TONTCHO TONTCHEV**
    Bulgaria 24-0

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 23-2-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **CELES KOBAYASHI**
   Japan 23-4-3 (WBA Champ)
3. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 20-3-1 (IBF Champ)
4. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea 18-1
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines 43-3-2
6. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela 34-8-3
7. **SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand 40-0
8. **ADONIS RIVAS**
   Nicaragua 16-1-1
9. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia 25-2
10. **DIEGO MORALES**
    Mexico 25-1

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 29-0 (WBA Champ)
2. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 25-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 39-2 (WBC Champ)
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa 18-1
5. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand 23-1
6. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand 39-1
7. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 45-3
8. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 21-0-1
9. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines 11-1-1
10. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
    Venezuela 16-0

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico 49-0-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 23-1 (WBC Champ)
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 23-1
4. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 29-2-1 (WBA Champ)
5. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 26-1
6. **ZOLANI PETELO**
   South Africa 17-2-2
7. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN 15-2-1
8. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 26-3-1
9. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
   Japan 23-1
10. **NELSON DIEPPA**
    Puerto Rico 20-2-1

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

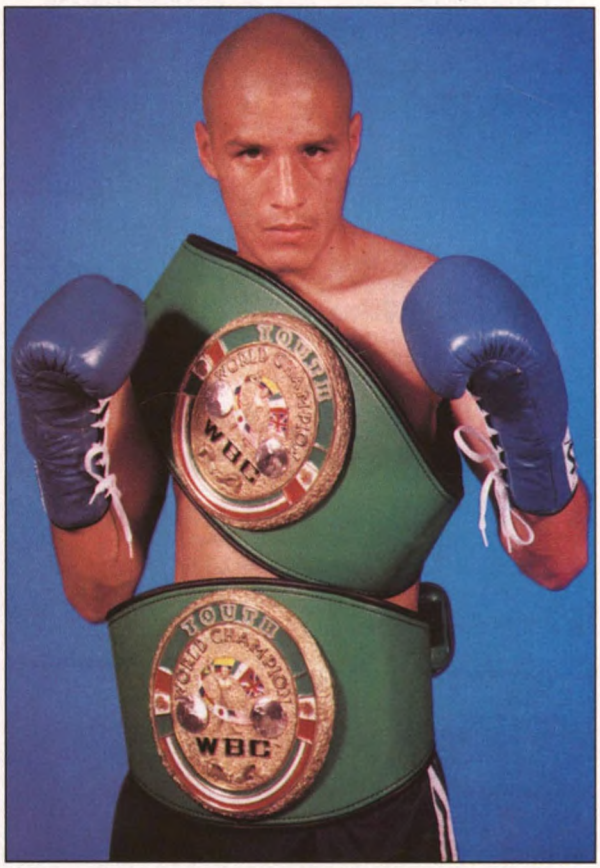
1. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 43-1-2 (WBA Champ)
2. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 25-1-1 (WBC Champ)
3. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico 18-0 (IBF Champ)
4. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan 21-7
5. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines 30-6-1
6. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 13-2-1
7. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand 28-4
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 33-2
9. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 24-1
10. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
    Japan 13-0-2

NEW FACES

FERNANDO VELARDEZ

Featherweight

By Joe Santoliquito



Every time Fernando Velardez drives down Waterman Avenue, his eyes invariably spot the short red brick wall. He glances over the brim of the wall looking for something he knows he can't find. The glare from the sun bounces off the stone and marble edifices behind the wall, and it gives "Bobby Boy" hope that one day he'll be able to look in the direction of the wall and know where his mother is.

Velardez may have a deeper reason to become a world champion than most, motivated by the fact that somewhere behind that red brick wall is his mother's grave site. Velardez and his four brothers made a collective vow that the flat tombstone she is buried under will have an angel above it so the family can recognize where Charlene Velardez lies.

"It's why I started fighting, with the hope to get enough money to buy a stone or an angel or something to put up there for my mother," Velardez said. "Ever since my mother passed away, it's something I thought about. I was young when she died, but it's a promise me and my brothers made to ourselves. We were going to put our money together and buy a stone. We're still trying to do it. We're close."

If Bobby Boy continues to progress, he could very well reach contender status within a year, giving his family the funds it needs for an upright tombstone. Velardez, 17-4-1 (4), certainly helped himself toward that goal with a surprising upset of Juan Carlos Ramirez on the Marco Antonio Barrera-Naseem Hamed undercard in Las Vegas on April 7.

A decided underdog entering the Ramirez fight, Velardez displayed a relentless attack that dropped Ramirez twice in the third round and finished him at the 2:30 mark of the sixth.

"I just went in there to fight," Velardez said. "I was in shape. I really didn't care about Ramirez' record or who he was; it didn't matter to me. I take every fight like that. I went to the movies right before the fight and had some fun, then went in and fought. There was no nervous-

(Continued on page 90)

PRO RECORD

1999		
March 3	Armando Contreras, Indio, CA	D 4
April 8	Edward Utorov, Irvine, CA	KO by 2
June 19	Armando Contreras, Bakersfield, CA	W 5
Aug. 11	Daniel Perez, Montebello, CA	W 4
Aug. 23	Edwin Zarate, Los Angeles	L 4
Oct. 7	Noe Inzunza, Irvine	W 4
Oct. 12	Rene Silva, Irvine	W 4
Nov. 10	Crisoforo Ruiz, Montebello	KO 2
Dec. 2	Edward Utorov, Irvine	W 6
2000		
Feb. 10	Armando Contreras, Hemet, CA	W 10
March 11	Marinho Gonzalez, Irvine	W 4
March 18	Victor Polo, Las Vegas	L 6
May 12	Felipe Campa, San Bernardino, CA	KO 8
June 18	Edwin Zarate, Las Vegas	W 4
July 16	Edgar Jasso, Las Vegas	W 10
Aug. 20	Jose Cotto, East St. Louis, IL	L 10
Sept. 23	Edgar Jasso, Ontario, CA	W 10
Oct. 20	Dustin Kim, Las Vegas	KO 1
Dec. 29	Daniel Rodriguez, Las Vegas	W 10
2001		
Feb. 22	Antonio Ramirez, Hollywood, CA	W 10
March 11	Eusebaldo Ramirez, Sacramento, CA	W 10
April 7	Juan Carlos Ramirez, Las Vegas	KO 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
22	17	4	1	4

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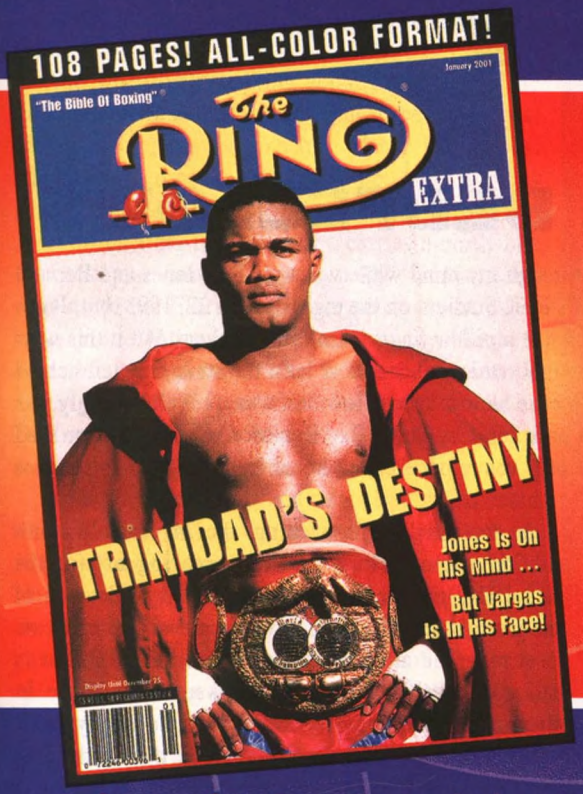

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RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

A lot of thoughts were running through my mind while watching Roy Jones and Bernard Hopkins tangle in Washington's RFK Stadium on the night of May 22, 1993, but, *Wow, this makes Hagler-Hearns look like a pillow fight!* wasn't one of them. Put it this way: It's a good thing Jones and Hopkins fought outdoors because at least the stink they left behind didn't linger long before a cool night breeze blew it away. How dull was it? Well, not only was their snoozer not worthy of a division once ruled by Sugar Ray Robinson, Carlos Monzon, and Marvin Hagler, but it wasn't worthy of a venue once called home by Sonny Jurgensen, Joe Theismann, and John Riggins.

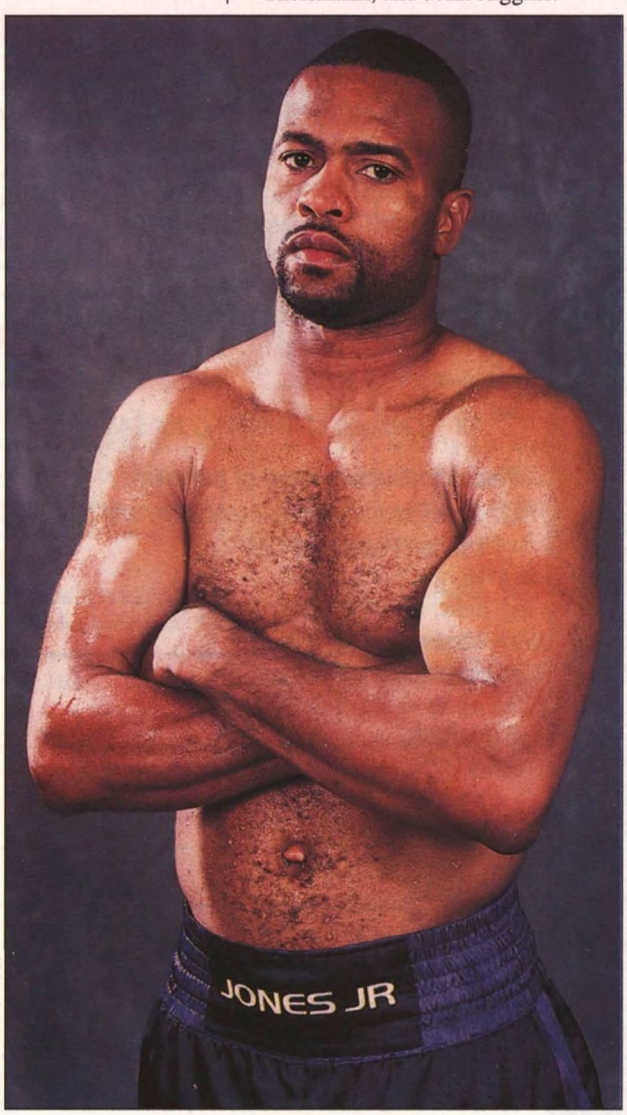


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Jones has come a long way since 1993

On that forgettable evening, the 24-year-old Jones and 28-year-old Hopkins were squaring off for the vacant IBF middleweight crown on the undercard of heavyweight king Riddick Bowe's defense against Jesse Ferguson. The attendance was listed as 8,500, but in reality, only half that many people were in the house. In other words, one body for every 13 or so empty seats. Compared to the fight crowd that night, the stands at an XFL game look like Woodstock.

Jones, who had kayoed 20 of his previous 21 foes, was awarded the unanimous decision following 12 rounds of inaction from which this ringsider can't recall a single compelling moment. ("I was very tight coming in with all the buildup and pressure of my first world title fight," the winner would say later.) After the bout, had someone polled the fans trudging across the darkened parking lot to their cars, or the reporters banging out stories on deadline in the press room, how many of them do you think would have predicted that Jones and Hopkins would be the two most dominant titlists in the game eight years hence? Probably the same number who'd have been clamoring for a rematch: zero.

Nowadays, of course, Jones-Hopkins II seems like the greatest idea since the DVD. It's a matchup that still wouldn't come close to filling a stadium (or even many arenas), but it would surely pack the living rooms of the diehards and maybe even get a measure of mainstream attention this time, as well. Jones and Hopkins being able to come so far from that disappointing night eight years ago certainly is a testimony to the redemptive power of the Sweet Science. Though boxing is a sport that is so often described as unforgiving, the truth is that it forgives aplenty. Especially if you have talent and desire and the kind of mind set that doesn't allow a setback to be viewed as a crisis.

The ascent of Jones and Hopkins, who are two of only four fighters who currently hold multiple versions of a world title, is also a reminder that there is no standard road map to Canastota. One guy might have his designed by Rand McNally, and the next guy might have his scribbled on the back of a napkin in faded ink. Doesn't matter. They'll both find their way there.

And when we're talking about fighters who are different, we must be talking about these two. Jones, for instance, turned pro out of the Olympics. Hopkins turned pro out of the penitentiary. Hopkins punches in sequence. Jones punches in sequins. Jones owns a big HBO contract, carries himself like a movie star, moonlights as a TV analyst, and retreats to his Florida farm for solitude. Hopkins hasn't received nearly the media attention he's deserved, carries himself like, well, a fighter, has no TV gig, and "escapes" the serenity of suburban Delaware to train in a basement gym in a blighted section of West Philadelphia.

Jones cuts rap records and wears trunks that could illuminate half of Las Vegas during a power outage. Hopkins cuts off the ring and drapes himself in basic black. Jones is blistering speed and knockout punches the other guy never saw coming. Hopkins is body-punching and the gradual zapping of the enemy's spirit. Jones says he wishes he could fight less. Hopkins says he wishes title bouts were still 15 rounds. Jones has no nickname that has stuck. Hopkins, "The Executioner," has one of boxing's best. Last but not least, Jones teases us with talk of a move up to heavyweight. And Hopkins teases us with talk of a move up to ... Jones.

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Hopkins is closing in on Monzon's record

And though it has seemed like a longshot for years, that sequel still may happen. You, like much of the media, can join the Felix Trinidad Fan Club and root, root, root for "Tito" to emerge as the lone survivor from the middleweight unification tournament. But you won't see me standing on the corner and waiting for that bandwagon to drive by. Trinidad weighed only 147 pounds not that long ago, and he doesn't possess the strength required to threaten a legitimate light heavyweight like Jones, even if they do fight at 168 pounds. We're talking one-sided beating here. That's why I'd rather see Hopkins unify the crown and then meet Jones at the catchweight.

A return bout would be pretty intriguing, no? Would the game's two most dominant champions, relying on the experience, skills, and confidence gained in the eight years since their first encounter, stage a classic? Or would they instead offer further proof that styles make fights and that they could never put on a good show even if they fought a dozen times? Hell, let's find out.

And in the meantime, let's recognize how truly special Jones and Hopkins have been since the spring of '93. Since that night under the stars in D.C., Jones has won belts in two more weight classes, become the only undisputed champion in the sport, and earned a mention among the great light heavyweights like Billy Conn, Archie Moore, Bob Foster, and Michael Spinks. Hopkins, on the other hand, has won two-thirds of the middleweight crown, made a total of 13 defenses (one short of Monzon's record), and been more of a throwback to the golden age of boxing than any fighter since a young Mike Tyson.

Have Jones and Hopkins benefited from some soft competition at times? Sure they have. But, as Hasim Rahman showed against Lennox Lewis, an upset is always just one punch away. It's been truly remarkable that Jones has maintained his level of performance despite experiencing self-doubt about his commitment, being bored by a lack of quality competition, and wrestling with the idea of fighting heavyweights. And it's been no less incredible that Hopkins has continued to spit fire despite forever starving for attention, chasing big fights that, for years, never materialized, and reaching an age (36) when most fighters are in serious decline.

Think about all that the next time you watch two heralded young fighters deliver a performance that has you reaching for the coffee and the No-Doz. That apparent dud that you're watching might actually be a rocket launch in disguise. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

WHY JUDGES STINK

Along the border, in towns from East Texas through California, lots of opponents come up from Mexico to challenge the locals and fill out the cards. Most have been fighting in shabby clubs and makeshift arenas for not many pesos. Sometimes they arrive out of shape and spend hours in the steam room to make weight. Sometimes, they've done their roadwork and they come up with a plan and plenty of hard gym work behind them.

And you never know which kind you're going to get. But even out-of-shape Mexicans can be plenty dangerous in the early rounds, before the sand runs out of their hourglass.

With Hugo Dianzo in front of him, WBA bantamweight champ Paulie Ayala quickly learned he drew the wrong Mexican. Dianzo scored the more effective punches. He was more successful as an aggressor, and most of the time he controlled the action, making Ayala fight his fight. Dianzo was also better defensively. In case you didn't notice, those are the factors judges are instructed to apply when they score a fight, weighted first to last.

The unanimous decision for Ayala may not have been quite as terrible as ESPN2's Teddy Atlas believed, but it definitely stunk. Why do judges make such awful decisions? In some cases they are downright incompetent. In this case, the fight was in Fort Worth, Texas, Ayala's hometown. But a ton of reasons can be involved in bad decisions, and none of them smell like daffodils.

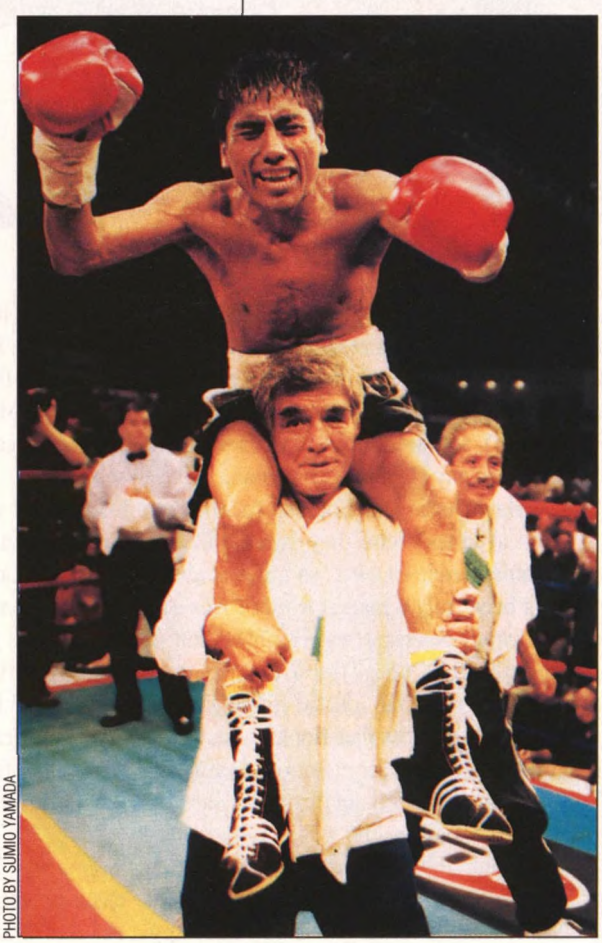


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Dianzo thought he'd won, then came the decision

At little cards in Podunk, officials are lucky if they make maybe a C-note for a night's work, depending on the state, the size of the crowd, and other factors. California's part-time officials, for example, make approximately $150 to $200 for a card that attracts 3,000 fans.

But in big, televised title fights, officials can earn several thousand plus expenses while escaping the daily grind of their day jobs for a few days in Vegas, Atlantic City, or maybe even Paris or London. Eugenia Williams, the New Jersey judge who didn't notice Lennox Lewis practically removing Evander Holyfield's head in the fifth round of their first fight, earned over $5,000 for that little piece of work.

The disparity in paychecks between the big time and the small time strongly tempts officials to lean toward the fighter the promoter wants to win. It's the promoter, after all, who's paying them. And the promoter and his cronies in the alphabet organizations, in cahoots with state commissions, decide the assignments under cover of darkness.

There's a general suspicion that some beefy crook with a diamond pinky ring forks over wads of unpaid bills to buy the officials. The truth is ugly, but rarely so blatant. The officials are like politicians who take money in exchange for favoring legislation and then walk around with clear consciences. That's because the two parties never precisely spell out the terms of their clearly understood dirty deal. Because it may be technical-

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/ALLSPORT

Oscar battered Gatti and insulted Arum

ly legal, it's easier for wrongdoers to look you in the eye and swear they're doing no wrong.

When fighters like Dianzo look across the ring, they know their opponent isn't always just the guy on the opposite stool. Because sometimes the opponent is also a giant promoter who knows all the judges and the names of their children. It's a powerful media conglomerate, a personal nutritionist, a private chef, and an entire squadron of world-class handlers wearing matching, spiffy uniforms.

When the Dianzos of this world beat all the odds and prevail in the ring, it's a hideous thing to see their prize taken away by an anonymous shroud of a system that, like a psychopath, shows no mercy or remorse. It just rolls over the Dianzos like a steamroller over a soldier ant.

I didn't catch the license of this particular steamroller. But the judges in Fort Worth were Anibal Miramontes and Samuel Conde, who scored it 115-113, and Gale Van Hoy, who had it 115-112, all for Ayala. Were these judges influenced by greed, politics, the Fort Worth crowd, or their own preconceived notions as to who they thought should be the winner? For the future of boxing, it matters greatly. But to Dianzo, the bottom line is that he was unjustly denied a life-changing accomplishment. And that stinks.

WAS THAT APOLOGY KOSHER?: Oscar De La Hoya's mind must have been on vacation when he bragged he "defeated one of the biggest Jews [promoter Bob Arum] to come out of Harvard." The statement is unlikely to harm his career. But after De La Hoya's handlers realized it could conceivably cost them endorsement dinero, they shot out an explanatory statement. It stressed De La Hoya's respect for all nationalities and religions, etc., etc. It also strongly implied he apologized directly to Arum, which didn't happen.

Unlike Arum, I personally never got anywhere near Harvard. But I am also Jewish, so this is a touchy subject for me. Still, I feel compelled to defend De La Hoya. Knowing him as I do, watching him all these years, I find it hard to believe that Arum's religion or nationality would have anything to do with Oscar's animosity.

Because sooner or later De La Hoya screws everyone associated with him, regardless of race, creed, or color. Time after time, he's proved to be an equal-opportunity double-crosser. De La Hoya has fired more trainers, managers, promoters, advisers, cornermen, flunkies, and girlfriends than the personnel manager for a large Internet company.

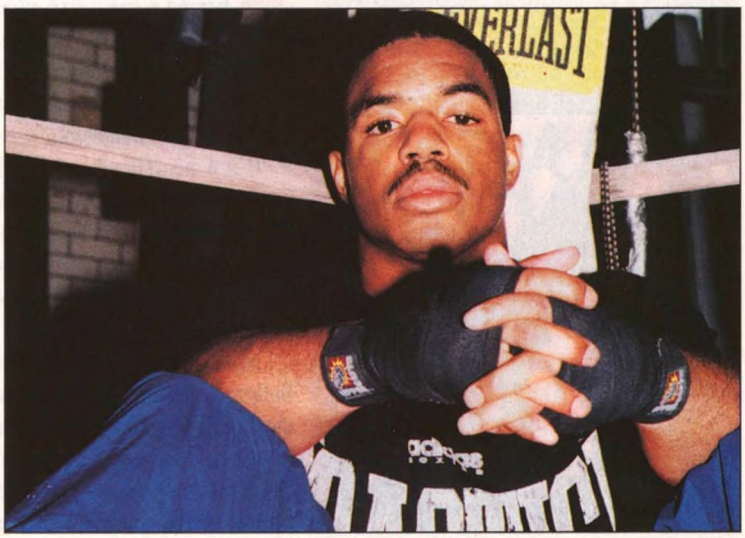
I wish De La Hoya every success with Arum's successor, Jerry Perenchio. But it's worth considering that before he put together the De La Hoya-Arturo Gatti card in Las Vegas, Perenchio's last fight promotion occurred when people wore Nehru jackets and drove around in Corvairs listening to The Bee Gees on 8-track tapes. He may have some catching up to do.

THE FAT LADY SANG: David Reid looked a little too pleased he was able to go 10 rounds against Urbano Gurrola, a journeyman who will most likely never be heard from again. It was terribly clear to everyone else that Reid's victory by decision was conspicuously hollow for an Olympian once considered a world-beater.

The problem isn't that Reid's career is on the skids. It's that his skills are on the skids. Once again his combinations were uncreative, lackluster, ineffective, or just absent. His movements were unsure, his footwork and defensive talents not there. His stamina looked better, but the old aggression was gone.

Reid is considered one of the sport's truly nice guys. But after Felix Trinidad beat him like a tambourine in their March 2000 crowd-pleaser, the previously gifted Reid suffered an almost supernatural deterioration into the mediocre fighter he is now. He fights like he's waiting in vain for instructions from an alien spacecraft. He's like one of those infielders that gets spooked and can no longer make what used to be a simple throw to first.

It would be sweet to see Reid get back his mojo. But when baseball players lose their edge, they just lose games; fighters get beat up. Some—like Meldrick Taylor after he lost to Julio Cesar Chavez—grow old in one fight. More and more, it looks like David Reid, only 27, has fought that fight. ■



Is Reid washed-up already?

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Tickets: Prices are $25 and $35. Shows are usually sold out, so try to order in advance. But tickets are almost always available up until fight time. If they say no, ask to see the boss, Roy Englebrecht. He's been known to sell last-minute seats along the ring apron, next to the officials.

Who to look out for: California fighters spotted among the spectators include Terry and Orlin Norris, Roberto Garcia, and Genaro Hernandez. Like most fighters, they like fans and are approachable. Also, fighters on the card mingle in the audience after their bouts.

Advice to greenhorns: Don't pay for valet parking at the hotel. Find Prego's restaurant and bar, a block away, and park in the pay lot across the street. Think they'll they be there at closing time to collect your money?

Inside the ballroom, it's not uncommon for some guy sitting nearby to announce he wants to bet a fight after it starts. If you think he's wrong, take the wager. The guy's a loudmouth anyway.

The ballroom draws a diverse clientele

Plenty of souvenirs for sale

By Ivan Goldman

Everybody knows what a traditional boxing arena is like, especially a club-fight arena that never sees big-time cards because there are no TV cameras and not even a fraction of the purse money needed to attract big-time fighters.

It's a no-frills kind of place. Gritty. Sticky in the summer, drafty in the winter. The neighborhood doesn't always smell nice, and no one would want to walk down any of the nearby alleys without a SWAT team escort.

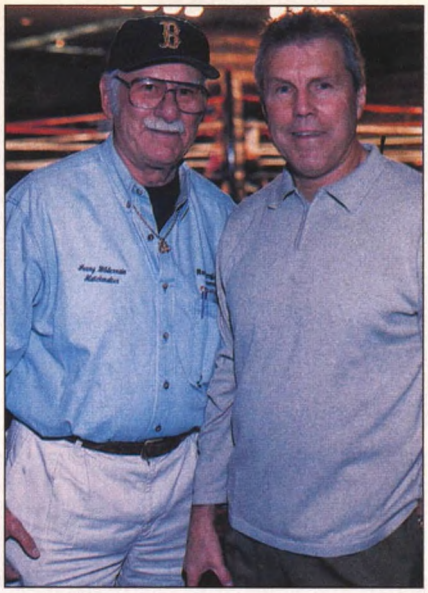
None of this describes the Battle in the Ballroom. That's right—ballroom. Not one of those old, down-at-the-heels ballrooms that haven't seen good times since Benny Goodman was at the top of all the charts. It's a nice, spiffy, modern ballroom with thick carpets that get shampooed regularly. Chandeliers, air conditioning, valet parking outside. That kind of ballroom.

The ballroom fights at the Marriott Hotel in Irvine, California, held several Thursdays a year, attract traditional fans as well as the New Economy neighbors who show up when they're done putting together whatever kinds of deals they put together.

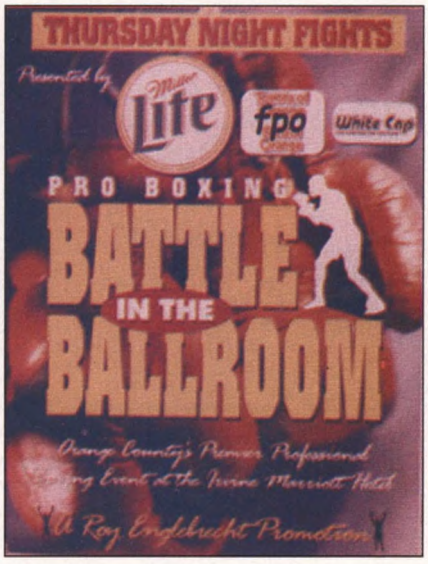
The ballroom sells out regularly. And even though the venue is not typical, the fights inside are the real thing. The matchmaker, Jerry Bilderrain, was matchmaker to the dinosaurs. And promoter Roy Englebrecht is the only promoter in Southern California to consistently show a profit. These cards have been going on since 1984. In California, that makes it a tradition.

"Half our 1,350 seats go to season ticket holders," said Englebrecht, who got his start working for original ballroom promoter Don Frazier. "That would be a phenomenal num-

Two Southern California beauties announce raffle winners



Matchmaker Bilderrain and promoter Englebrecht



Sign of the times

ber in any sport. In boxing, it's unheard of. We get 100 percent renewal on our season tickets. And we haven't raised our prices in six years. You know why? I don't want any empty seats. And, I don't have any. You get a place that's filled up, and it creates more excitement."

Javier Mora and Billy Zumbrun slug it out under the chandelier

Englebrecht can say plenty more about his shows because, after all, he's a boxing promoter. Ever seen a quiet one? But he really has something decent to sell.

Shane Mosley, Genaro Hernandez, and Danny "Little Red" Lopez are just some of the fighters who competed here before they achieved, moved up, and became too expensive for the ballroom. Johnny Tapia came from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to fight his pro debut here. These are not the kind of guys who sign for million-dollar bonuses. They had fine amateur records, but for one reason or another didn't make the right connections. So they fought their way up the hard way, without a lot of gimmes—from the ballroom.

And sometimes the very best matches here are fought by fighters who don't have world class written all over them. But they're evenly matched with other guys like them. And they won't give an inch.

"Other promoters, if fans throw money in the ring for the fighters once a year, they're lucky," Englebrecht said. "Jerry and I, we figure if the fans don't throw in money at least once a show, we failed."

The ballroom fights could even lead the way to boxing's salvation. Sure, rough and tough venues can be fun. But if the neighborhood and the crowd scare people away, they can't reach out to a broader boxing audience the way the ballroom does consistently.

So what if the fans ask for sushi at the buffet? They're still fans. ■

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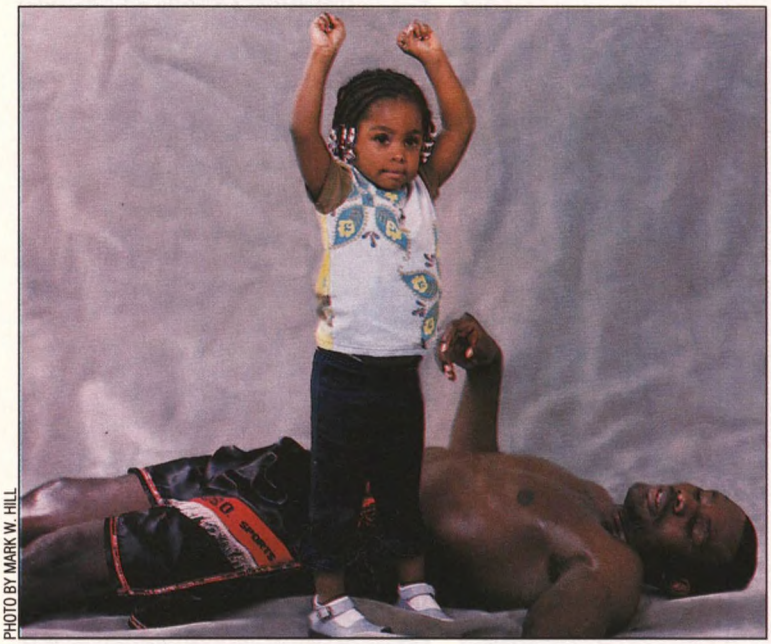

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

The winner and new heavyweight champion of the world ... Amirah Rahman! Hasim's daughter showed Lennox Lewis how it's done, flattening her daddy with ease when the Rahman family dropped by THE RING's offices in May. Given the recent trend of daughters of heavyweight champs entering the ring, it should come as no surprise to see Amirah getting in on the act.

PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

Want to pad your record? Come see the Strickland cousins, Jerry (left) and Reggie, who boast nearly 350 combined losses. But if you want to be really safe, stay away from Reggie, who had the nerve to win four of his 15 fights last year, and go after 48-year-old Jerry, loser of 21 straight, 16 by kayo. With numbers like that, Jerry can expect to see his name in the WBC rankings any day now.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

In Las Vegas, where lavishness and excess are king, the incredibly understated grave stone of former heavyweight champion Sonny Liston is truly a strange sight. But at least if you visit it, all you stand to lose is a bouquet of flowers, as opposed to your shirt.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Don't make fun of this kid's over-the-top smile; you'd be pretty psyched, too, if your cousin just won the heavyweight championship of the world. Young Aliyah and Marquis Rahman were at the new champ's victory parade in Baltimore, displaying plenty of pride over "The Rock" bringing the title home.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Two issues ago, we ran a photo of Angel Manfredy acting as a round-card girl. No offense, Angel, but if you don't mind, we'd rather see these two doing that job.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Don't get in that car, Rock! It's almost like watching a scary movie and screaming, "Don't go in there!", since we all know what happened shortly after Hasim Rahman climbed into this red convertible. Fortunately, nobody was seriously hurt when another vehicle collided with Rahman's car at the conclusion of his parade in Baltimore.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Geez, everybody's getting through to Lennox Lewis' chin these days! Perhaps Hasim Rahman studied this picture of Wladimir and Vitaly Klitschko lining Lewis up and took note of the fact that he leaves himself open whenever he stands still with that big, goofy grin on his face.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Boxing and gymnastics aren't usually closely associated with one another, but here former light heavyweight champion John Conteh shows that he knows his way around the parallel bars. We doubt very highly that Mary Lou Retton would be able to perform as respectably in the prize ring.

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Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet? Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry. Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

April 1987: Hagler-Leonard Souvenir Issue. Plus: Czyz, Orlando Canizales, Mugabi-Thomas, Biggs-Snipes, Chavez-LaPorte, Bonecrusher-Witherspoon II, Haugen-Paul.

May 1987: Mike Tyson: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, *The Ring* annual ratings, Louie Espinoza, Herol Graham.

June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony? Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new *Ring* ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

Aug. 1987: Sugar Ray: Still In Style. Plus: Leonard-Hagler, all-time heavyweight ratings, Czyz-MacDonald, Camacho-Davis.

Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future? Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

Nov. 1987: Tyson Wins Heavyweight Triple Crown. Plus: McCallum-Curry, Carlos Monzon interview, triple champions, Orlin & Terry Norris, Ramirez-Alli, Fenech-Richardson, Matthew Hilton.

Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys. Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn-Million Dollar Baby? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Aug. 1988: Julio Cesar Chavez: The Kid From Culiacan. Plus: Holyfield, bad decisions, Lockridge-Knight, Starling-Breland II, Brown-Trice, Haugen-Santana.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

Feb. 1989: Julio Cesar Chavez. Plus: Chavez-Ramirez, all-time lightweight ratings, Louie Espinoza, Simon Brown, Roger Mayweather.

March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

Jan. 1990: Boxing's Bible Reborn At Age 68. Plus: Carlos Monzon, Mike Tyson, Leonard-Duran, Daniel Zaragoza, Nunn-Barkley, Whitaker-Ramirez, George Foreman (color).

Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

April 1990: Pernell Whitaker: Fighter Of The Year (color). Plus: Tiger Flowers, Duran-Leonard, Chavez-Taylor preview, Jorge Paez, Ali-Cooper.

May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!" Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

June 1990: Buster! How James Douglas Shocked The World. Plus: Michael Moorer, Camacho-Paez, Tommy Farr, Excuses, Dick Tiger, Ruben Olivares-Jeff Chandler.

July 1990: "I'm Hungrier Than Ever Before," By Evander Holyfield. Plus: James Toney, Buddy McGirt, Glenwood Brown, Aaron Davis, Michael Carbajal, Jorge Paez, Kid Gavilan, Mark Breland, Ali-Liston II (color).

Aug. 1990: Chavez: His Greatness Confirmed ... Is He The Best Mexican Fighter Ever? Plus: Matthew Saad Muhammad, John L. Sullivan & Mike Tyson, Michael Nunn, Mark Breland, Harold Johnson, Cus D'Amato, Louis-Godoy (color).

Sept. 1990: Marvin Hagler-Can He Resist The Irresistible Temptation? Plus: Thomas Hearns, Sanchez-Saddler, Paul Banke, puncher vs. chin, Beau Jack, Robinson-LaMotta (color).

Oct. 1990: Rocky Graziano—Thanks For The Memories. Plus: Aaron Pryor, Junior Jones, Mike Tyson, Chris Eubank, Wolgast-Nelson, Hall of Fame.

Nov. 1990: Tyson vs. Foreman. Can Iron Mike Stop The Blast From The Past? Plus: Bruce Seldon, best chins, Sullivan-Kilrain (color), Azumah Nelson, LaStarza.

Dec. 1990: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Douglas-Holyfield preview, Julio Cesar Chavez, Joe Grim, Whitaker-Nazario, Rosi-Van Horn, Benny Leonard, Douglas-Tyson (color).

Jan. 1991: Boxing's Baddest Bad Boy: Nigel Benn Plays By His Own Rules. Plus: Roberto Duran, Kid Akeem, Jose Napoles, Jimmy Carruthers, LaMotta-Zale, Dempsey-Willard (color).

Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay! Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

March 1991: Hunger! It Made Evander A Champ, But ... Plus: Dempsey-Firpo, Charles Murray, Khaosai Galaxy, Nunn-Curry, Henry Armstrong, Sonny Liston (color).

April 1991: Julio Cesar Chavez—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Tyson-Stewart, James Leija, Wilfred Benitez, Pedro Decima, Moore-Bassey.

June 1991: Pain, Frustration, Confidence, And Hope: Meldrick Taylor's Life After Chavez. Plus: Foreman-Holyfield preview, Norris-Leonard, David Kamau, Freddie Steele, Bennie Briscoe, Leonard's career (color).

July 1991: Tyson's Title Hopes: He Ain't What He Used To Be...But It's Not Gonna Matter. Plus: Eusebio Pedroza, Myung Woo Yuh, Willie Meehan, Hearns-Hill preview, computer junior welterweight tournament, Gomez-Fenech, controversial heavyweight finishes (color).

Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Oct. 1991: A Hit Again-How Far Can Thomas Hearns Go? Plus: Battling Levinsky, Oba Carr, Dave McAuley, Muhammad Ali, Lou Ambers, Luther McCarty, ethnic matchups, computer light heavy tournament, Cerdan-Hagler, Rocky Marciano (color).

Dec. 1991: Evander Holyfield vs. Mike Tyson: Who Will Win And Why. Plus: Eddie Aliano, Jack Britton, Muhammad Ali, Pernell Whitaker, rating the 44 world champions, Marcel Cerdan, Henry Cooper, Ezzard Charles-Jersey Joe Walcott (color).

May 1992: James Toney—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Myung Woo Yuh, Khaosai Galaxy, Rocky Graziano, Billy Soose, Roy Jones, James Warring, Duran-Chavez, Marvin Hagler (color).

June 1992: What Now? Boxing Without Mike Tyson. Plus: Buck Smith, Liston-Foreman, Billy Graham, Holmes-Mercer, Enrique Pinder, Hilario Zapata, Toney-Tiberi, Benny Lynch, Tony DeMarco, Tyson centerfold (color).

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

Sept. 1992: Chavez: Unbeaten At 80-0, But What If He Had To Face These Guys? Plus: Bobby Czyz, Genaro Hernandez, Norris-Taylor, Tommy Gibbons, Sugar Ray Leonard's career, Sugar Ray Robinson (color).

Oct. 1992: The Supreme Dream: The Heavyweight Hopes Of The Heavyweight Hopefuls. Plus: Kevin Kelley, All-Time Top 10: South Africa, Meldrick Taylor, Sharmba Mitchell, Bob Foster, Eder Jofre, Max Baer (color).

Nov. 1992: Is Riddick Bowe The Next Heavyweight Champion? Plus: Morrison-Hipp, Canizales-Chandler, Chavez-Camacho preview, Australia Best of Nation, Tyson speaks from prison, Corbett-Sullivan (color), Tracy Patterson, Pat Barrett, Knockout Brown.

Feb. 1993: America's Tribute To The Brown Bomber: Joe Louis. Plus: Virgil Hill, Junior Jones, Roger Mayweather, Chicago boxing, Orlando Zulueta, Jose Napoles (color).

March 1993: From Question Man To Answer Man: Riddick Bowe Leaves No Doubts. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Lopez-Gamache, Frank Bruno, Rocky Kansas, Frank Fletcher, Crisanto Espana, Bowe-Lewis (color).

April 1993: Riddick Bowe: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: "Grand Slam" fight card, Toney-Barkley preview, Morris East, Joe Louis-John Henry Lewis, All-Time Top 10: Argentina, Fighters of the Year (color).

May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, THE RING Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

Aug. 1993: A Ring Exclusive: Julio Cesar Chavez Speaks Out. Plus: Bobby Czyz, 10 hardest punchers, Rafael Ruelas, Carmen Basilio, closing of the Fifth Street Gym, Sugar Ray Leonard (color).

Oct. 1993: Tommy Morrison: Good Enough To Beat Big George, But Will He Win The Heavyweight Title? Plus: Riddick Bowe, Mike Capriano, Billy Conn-Joe Louis, All-Time Top 10: Puerto Rico, Charles Murray.

April 1994: Michael Carbajal: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Brown-Norris, Kevin Kelley, Ceferino Garcia, Oscar De La Hoya, Tunney Hunsaker, Spinks-Foster.

Aug. 1994: Bowe's Back! Determined To Do It Again. Plus: Eric Griffin, Pernell Whitaker, Ray Mercer, Roger Donoghue, State of the Game (midterm report), All-Time Top 10: The Philippines.

Oct. 1994: Rating The Champs: Whitaker & Toney Lead The Field ... But Roy Jones Is Closing Fast. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Meldrick Taylor, Rafael Ruelas, Curtis Cokes.

Nov. 1994: With Lewis Fighting Bowe ... Is Michael Moorer's Career Off-Target? Plus: Wayne McCullough, Hall of Fame, Alejandro Lavorante, Rocky Marciano, Paz-Duran, Injuries (part I), What If ... Pedroza vs. Sanchez.

Dec. 1994: Fighting-Mad! James Toney Just Wants To Beat People Up. Plus: Duran & Robinson, Don King, Mike McCallum, Injuries (part II), Tom Molineaux.

Jan. 1995: A Puncher's Dream: Oliver McCall Upsets Boxing's Balance Of Power. Plus: Ruelas brothers, Quincy Taylor, "Unfinished Business," Dave Maier, All-Time Top 10: Canada.

May 1995: The State Of The Game. Plus: Olzubek & Arbachakov, Gonzalez-Kelley, Pazienza-Duran II, All-Time Top 10: France.

June 1995: (92-Page Special): Foreman Frowns Upon The Age Gap: "I Don't Think Tyson Should Fight Anyone But Me." Plus: Least deserving heavyweight challengers, Carlos Monzon, Kostya Tszyu.

July 1995: Pernell Whitaker: *The Ring* Makes "Pound-For-Pound" An Official Title. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Ike Quartey, Benn-McClellan, TV prospects, Hector Acero-Sanchez, Harry Matthews, What If ... Robinson-Burley.

Oct. 1995 (92-Page Special): Mismatch? Don't Tell Peter McNeeley! Plus: Fights we'd like to see, Jo-el Scott, Bronco McKart, when stop fights?

Winter 1995 (92-Page Special): Buster Mathis Jr.: "Mike Tyson, You Got A Fight Comin' On." Plus: Holyfield-Bowe III preview, Wayne McCullough, Jesse James Hughes, Norris-Vaden preview, *The Ring* Insiders' Poll, What If ... Moore-Ayala Jr.

Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Also: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

May 1996: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Frankie Randall, Tim Witherspoon, Roy Jones, Bernard Hopkins.

Sept. 1996: Lennox Lewis: Tough Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lewis-Mercer, Olympic team, Pernell Whitaker, Mark Johnson, Rocky, Scrapiron Johnson, heavyweight hopefuls.

Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

Dec. 1996: Our Spin On Roy Jones. Plus: heavyweight division, Olympic recap, Luis Rodriguez, Puerto Rican fighters, Danny Hodge, Saad Muhammad.

May 1997: De La Hoya-Whitaker: Can "Sweet Pea" Stop Oscar's March To Greatness? Plus: Fitzsimmons-Corbett, Junior Jones, Phillip Holiday, Don King, Zaragoza-McCullough.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

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Oct. 1997: Bang! Naseem Hamed Takes Aim At America. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Phillips-Tszyu, Saman Sorjaturong, Bobby Dykes.

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Jan. 1998: Give This Man His Due! If You Can't Respect Oscar ... You Can't Respect Anyone! Plus: Sanchez-Mayweather, Morales-Zaragoza, Lucia Rijker, Marvin Johnson, characters.

Feb. 1998: Welter-Skelter! The Hottest Division In Boxing. Plus: Lewis-Golota, Olympic update, Art Shires, boxing I.Q.

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April 1998: Evander Holyfield: THE RING'S Fighter Of The Year (Again!). Plus: Yory Boy Campas, Mullings-Norris, Pinkey Mitchell, Holyfield Q & A, Hamed-Kelley, Oscar De La Hoya.

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Sept. 1998 (92-Page Special): This Man's Not Unbeatable! Five Top Trainers Reveal How To Solve The Hamed Puzzle. Plus: John Tate, Freddie Norwood, Andrew Golota, Roy Jones, 12 greatest finishes.

Oct. 1998: Really Hard Punch ... Really Soft Lips: Oscar Makes Legs Quiver In And Out Of The Ring. Plus: Hector Camacho Jr., Mayweather-Hernandez preview, *Tuesday Night Fights.*

Nov. 1998: Oscar De La Hoya vs. The All-Time Greats. Plus: David Reid, Fernando Vargas, Cory Spinks, LeRoy Neiman, Don King, Hall of Fame.

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April 1999 (92-Page Special): Fighter Of The Year: Floyd Mayweather Jr.: "He's So Good, It's Scary!" Plus: Fernando Vargas, James Page, Luisito Espinosa, Robinson-Gatti II, Archie Moore, Carlos Oritz, 1998 diary.

May 1999: Is It All Over For Tyson? Plus: Terry Norris, Vinny Pazienza, Jesus Pimental, stoppages, mandatories.

June 1999: The Fans Have Spoken: Results Of *The Ring* Readers' Poll. Plus: Michael Grant, De La Hoya-Quartey, Antwun Echols, Ted Lowry.

July 1999 (92-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Plus: Holyfield-Lewis, Felix Trinidad, Stevie Johnston, Emile Griffith, Phil Zwick.

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April 2000 (92-Page Special): Paulie Ayala—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Grant-Golota, Stephan Johnson, Gaspar Ortega, Kitten Hayward, writers' favorite fights.

May 2000: Lennox Lewis Will Quit ... Or Get Knocked Out, By Michael Grant. Plus: Roy Jones, Quartey-Vargas preview, Garth Panter, best chins, boxing movies.

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Sept. 2000: A New Look At Lennox Lewis: Is He An All-Time Great? Plus: Winky Wright, Michael Moorer, De La Hoya & Vargas, Eddie McGoorty.

Oct. 2000 (92-Page Special): Move Up Or Shut Up! We're Sick Of Roy Jones' Heavyweight Tease. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Tapia & Romero, Hasim Rahman, Dwight Qawi, Al Palzer, fight films, best refs.

(ALL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH THE DECEMBER 2000 ISSUE)

Dec. 2000: The Hell With Tyson—Tua Is The Man Who Could Beat Lewis. Plus: Mike Tyson, Felix Trinidad, Wladimir Klitschko, Trilla in Manila, U.S. vs. World, Toxey Hall.

Jan. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Trinidad's Destiny: Jones Is On His Mind ... But Vargas Is In His Face! Plus: Naseem Hamed, Tszyu-Judah, Evander Holyfield, Willie Bean, 20 greatest middleweights.

Feb. 2001: It's Not Over For Oscar: *The Ring's* Five-Step Recovery Plan. Plus: Bob Arum, Dingaan Thobela, Hernandez brothers, U.S. Olympic team, future pound-for-pounders.

March 2001 (108-Page Extra): Tyson! Forget About Retirement ... A Title Shot Awaits! Plus: Ayala-Tapia II, Audley Harrison, Chris Byrd, Kirk Johnson, Julio Cesar Chavez, Boone Kirkman, 12 most exciting rounds.

April 2001: A New Beginning ... A New Middle: Felix Trinidad Is Ready To Conquer Another Division! Plus: Shane Mosley, Lennox Lewis, Paul Andrews, boxing business.

May 2001 (108-Page Extra): Felix Trinidad—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Barrera-Hamed preview, Bernard Hopkins, Joey Archer.

June 2001: Pretty Boy Floyd: Superstar Or Superbrat? Plus: Lewis vs. greats, 2000 Olympians, Henry Hall, rematches we'd like to see.

July 2001 (108-Page Extra): The State Of The Game. Plus: Zab Judah, John Ruiz, Andrew Lewis, Mark Johnson, British boxing.

August 2001: Rocking The World! What Rahman's Victory Means To Boxing. Plus: Barrera-Hamed, Oscar De La Hoya, Mount Whitaker, *Friday Night Fights.*

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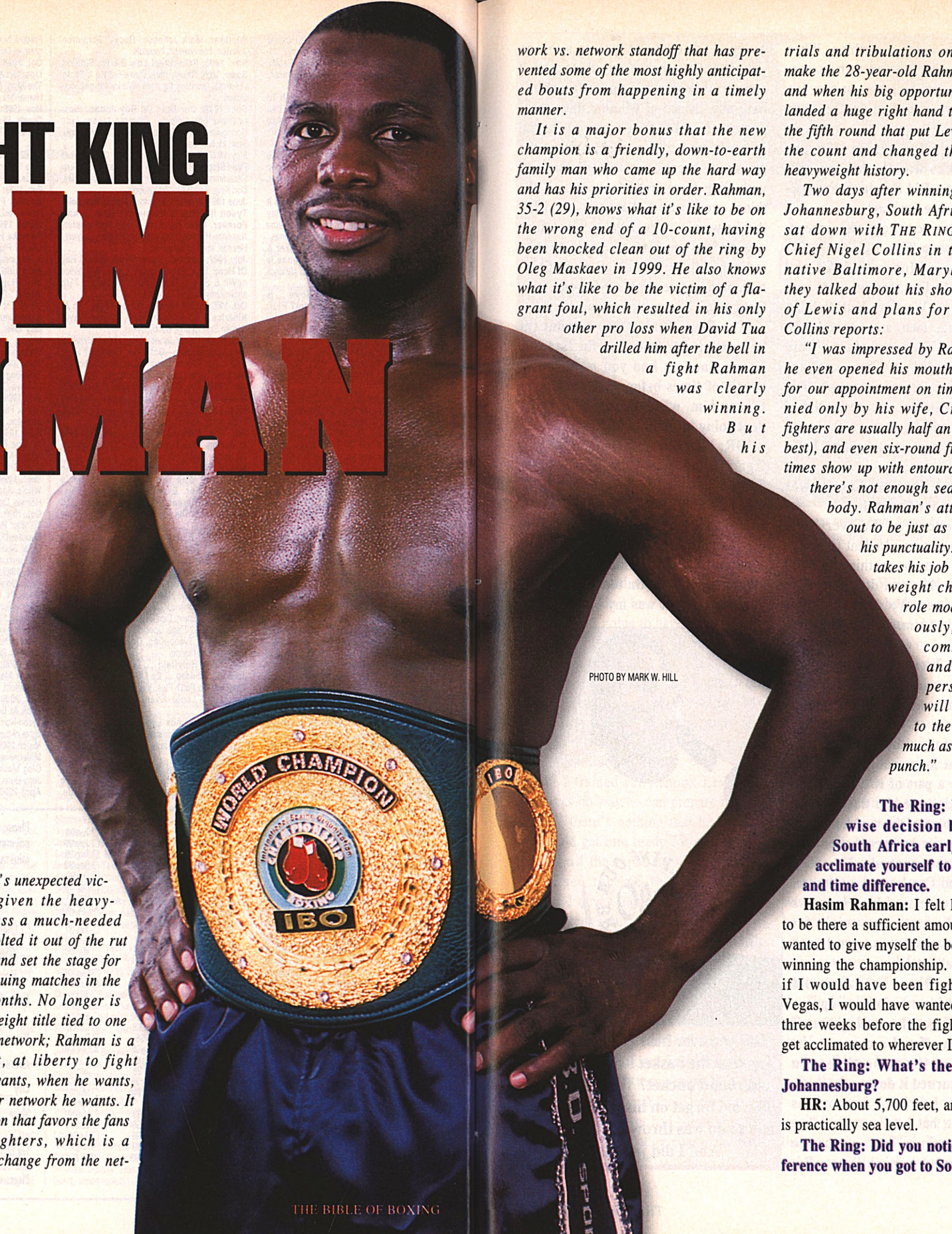

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Every once in a while, something happens that restores your faith in boxing and reminds you what a wonderful, wildly unpredictable endeavor it is—an athletic contest where one punch can instantaneously turn champs into chumps and make heroes out of guys most people have never heard of before. Such was the case when lightly regarded challenger Hasim "The Rock" Rahman knocked out reigning heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis in the biggest upset the sport's glamour division has seen since Buster Douglas did likewise to Mike Tyson more than a decade ago.

Rahman's unexpected victory has given the heavyweight class a much-needed shakeup, jolted it out of the rut it was in, and set the stage for other intriguing matches in the coming months. No longer is the heavyweight title tied to one particular network; Rahman is a free agent, at liberty to fight whom he wants, when he wants, on whatever network he wants. It is a situation that favors the fans and the fighters, which is a refreshing change from the network vs. network standoff that has prevented some of the most highly anticipated bouts from happening in a timely manner.

It is a major bonus that the new champion is a friendly, down-to-earth family man who came up the hard way and has his priorities in order. Rahman, 35-2 (29), knows what it's like to be on the wrong end of a 10-count, having been knocked clean out of the ring by Oleg Maskaev in 1999. He also knows what it's like to be the victim of a flagrant foul, which resulted in his only other pro loss when David Tua drilled him after the bell in a fight Rahman was clearly winning. But his trials and tribulations only served to make the 28-year-old Rahman stronger, and when his big opportunity came, he landed a huge right hand to the chin in the fifth round that put Lewis down for the count and changed the course of heavyweight history.

Two days after winning the title in Johannesburg, South Africa, Rahman sat down with THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins in the champ's native Baltimore, Maryland, where they talked about his shocking defeat of Lewis and plans for the future. Collins reports:

"I was impressed by Rahman before he even opened his mouth. He arrived for our appointment on time, accompanied only by his wife, Crystal. Most fighters are usually half an hour late (at best), and even six-round fighters sometimes show up with entourages so large there's not enough seats for everybody. Rahman's attitude turned out to be just as refreshing as his punctuality. Although he takes his job as the heavyweight champion and role model very seriously, he has the common touch and outgoing personality that will endear him to the fans just as much as his knockout punch."

The Ring: You made a wise decision by going to South Africa early enough to acclimate yourself to the altitude and time difference.

Hasim Rahman: I felt like I needed to be there a sufficient amount of time. I wanted to give myself the best chance of winning the championship. In fact, even if I would have been fighting in Las Vegas, I would have wanted to be there three weeks before the fight. I want to get acclimated to wherever I am.

The Ring: What's the altitude in Johannesburg?

HR: About 5,700 feet, and Baltimore is practically sea level.

The Ring: Did you notice a big difference when you got to South Africa?

HR: Yeah, but what I did first was go to training camp up in the Catskills, which is (co-manager) Stan's (Hoffman) training camp. I think it was around 4,000 feet up there, so I took it in stages. I didn't just come from Baltimore and jump straight to South Africa. I gradually got used to the altitude.

The Ring: Living in South Africa for those few weeks must have been a great experience.

HR: Absolutely. The people there were phenomenal; their hospitality was unbelievable. They went out of their way to make sure that me and my team were treated like royalty. I felt like I was home, from the minute I got there. I didn't get homesick.

The Ring: Were you originally a bit apprehensive, considering South Africa's apartheid past?

HR: I was a little suspect, but from the time I got there, the people took that feeling away. I didn't really feel I was in another country. I felt like I was maybe just in another state or around the corner. That's how at-home they made me feel. Everybody I came into contact with was friendly. I took to them, and they took to me. From the guys at Nick Durandt's gym, where he opened up and essentially made it our gym, to the newspaper reporter. He was with us all the time. In fact, when we got there, he predicted we were gonna lose, but he did a 180. He watched us train, watched our attitudes, and saw how calm and confident we were—and he changed his mind. We weren't cocky or anything, but we were confident we weren't leaving South Africa without the title.

The Ring: Even knowing that Lewis might not be in the best possible condition, hardly anybody picked you to win.

HR: Me myself, being a boxing guy, I wouldn't have picked me. That's why I couldn't have held it against anybody. Based on seeing my previous fights, I wouldn't have picked me. That Hasim Rahman who people have seen wouldn't have had a chance against Lennox, so I had to take it to another level.

The Ring: Even before the fight, it was obvious that your attitude was a lot different than Lewis'.

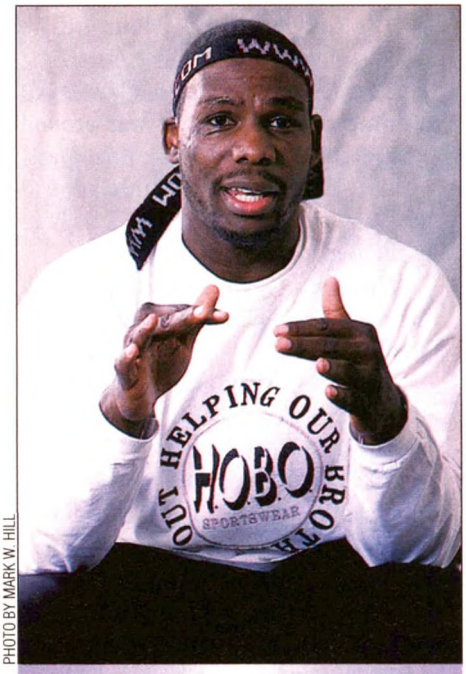

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

"When you cross-reference it, it's so similar to 'The Rumble In The Jungle.' Both Muhammad Ali and myself are Muslims, and we were both big underdogs. We were both fighting these big huge men, and nobody gave us a chance."

HR: I felt like I beat Lennox in every aspect. If you had to call a winner or a loser, I felt that I won every press conference. I endeared myself to the people in South Africa. I went into the streets. It wasn't like it was an act or a role; I was just myself, and I felt like they appreciated it. Overall, I felt like we won the whole war. We didn't just win the battle. We didn't lose a step. We didn't give up an inch. We didn't compromise any principles.

The Ring: It seemed that most of the crowd in Johannesburg was rooting for you. Did you sense that?

HR: Yes, I did. These were the people that I saw all the time. I was on numerous television shows, radio shows. I let the people touch me. I made myself accessible. When I was supposed to be somewhere, I was there on time. Not that I should get credit for that, because I feel that that was what I was supposed to do. But when you bring in the champion of the world, who says he wants to do this for the country, and then he's late and doesn't care about holding the media up for two or three hours, then it made it look like I'm doing something. When Lennox says he's going to be somewhere at 12, and he comes at two, it's like he showing disdain or disrespect for the people.

The Ring: You are an African-American who won the heavyweight title in Africa. Did that have any special significance for you?

HR: When you cross-reference it, it's so similar to "The Rumble In The Jungle." Both Muhammad Ali and myself are Muslims, and we were both big underdogs. We were both fighting these big huge men, and nobody gave us a chance. They thought we were going to get wiped out. Then there's the way we both embraced the people over there. It's so similar, it's eerie. Not to put myself and Lennox on the same page as those two great fighters, but it is what it is.

The Ring: Your confidence was obvious from the first bell.

HR: I believe we did everything right. We fought an excellent fight. We didn't give Lennox anything to build on, because when you do that, you're spelling disaster. We showed him we weren't afraid of him. We talked it and we walked it.

The Ring: Were you happy when he arrived late in South Africa and then weighed in at a career-high 253 pounds?

HR: Truthfully, I don't believe that the fight went long enough for conditioning to be a part of it. I didn't see him run; I didn't see him train. But he was the champion of the world, and I'm sure by this point he knew better than to underestimate anybody. I've been through it, and I've learned my lesson. He should have learned his. He knows you can't take any heavyweight for granted. Heavyweights can punch, and one punch is all it takes.

The Ring: Okay, but Lewis did take time out from training to appear in a movie. I get the feeling that if you had been offered a chance to be in a movie at the same time, you would have turned it down.

HR: Well, I do think Lennox was overconfident, but I believe that when you've been training hard, one or two days off to relax won't kill you. But acting is tiresome and it takes a toll on you. But if he chose to do that and felt comfortable that his opponent didn't have any chance of winning, then more power to him. But the one thing I learned is don't read too much into what the press says, because I got caught that way with Oleg Maskaev. I looked at all the things people wrote about him, and I felt that he wasn't on my level and that there was no way that it was going to take more than three rounds for me to finish him. But underestimating is something that I won't be a part of anymore.

The Ring: Taking into account the kayo loss to Maskaev and the fact that Corrie Sanders had you in trouble a couple of times before you came back to stop him, what made you so confident going into the Lewis fight?

HR: I learned more from the difficult fights I had than I did from all the blowouts. With David Tua, I felt like I beat him, and he was the best of the lot, so I didn't really have to prepare for the rest of these guys as much. And with Maskaev, it was a humiliating, humbling experience for me. On top of everything that happened, it was my birthday. And

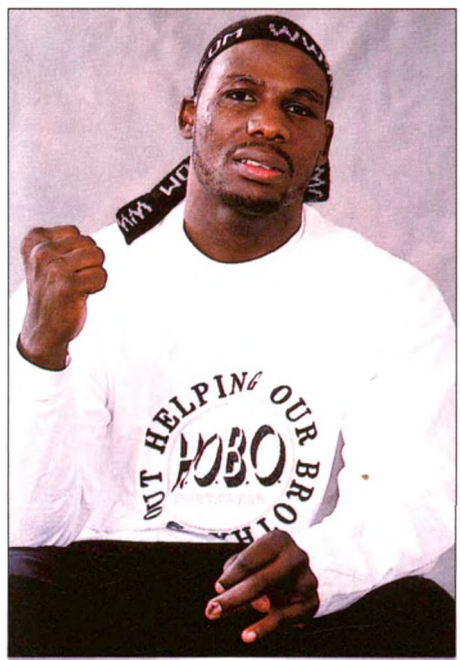

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

"Did you ever hear Michael Jordan say that the basket looks like a big, old round bucket? Well, I saw this big, old target on his chin, and all I had to do was throw the right hand. And I did just that."

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GREENHILL

Some of the fans who greeted Rahman upon his triumphant return from South Africa. "The Rock," a father of three children and an active member of his community, is just the sort of individual to bring credit to the game as heavyweight champion.

this man knocked me out of the ring. I thought I couldn't lose on my birthday. I thought I was going to have a double celebration, celebrating my victory and my birthday. Prior to the fight, I left camp. I just came home and stayed home. I did everything wrong. Everything. My preparation was totally wrong, and I still competed with him on even or better terms the whole fight.

But I trained for Lennox Lewis, so there was no way he can prepare for me, because there's nothing that he can see that could get him ready for me. He can look at all the tapes he wants, but he won't see the me that fought him because I never trained for any of those fights except Tua.

The Ring: When you say you didn't train for most of your fights, do you mean that you didn't train properly, or you didn't train at all?

HR: I didn't really put in the type of training and time I put into the Lewis fight. I trained for all my fights, but not as hard, with as much focus or without distractions. I had that fear that Lennox could beat me, which I never had before. I never felt like any of these other guys could beat me if I didn't give it 100 percent.

The Ring: What did fighting at 5 a.m. do to your body clock?

HR: I don't understand how I had any energy. I went to bed at 7 p.m., and I was going to sleep until 3 a.m., but I woke up at 10 p.m. and couldn't get back to sleep all night.

The Ring: How much did the cut over your left eye bother you?

HR: It was bothering me because the blood was getting in my eye, and things were getting blurry for me. But I believe it was an asset for me because I told myself, *You've got one round!* I knew that the ref was going to do something if I kept pawing at my eye. I knew that if it went much longer, the eye would become a major factor in the fight. So I told myself I only had one round and went out there and fought like it. I was trying to finish him in the fifth. He can say "luck" all he wants, but luck is being prepared when opportunity presents itself.

The Ring: Lewis never landed his right flush.

HR: If you notice, when I fight guys who I feel are a threat, I try to take away their strong suit. With Tua, I feel like I did an excellent job defensively up until the ninth round when he hit me after the bell. I nullified Tua's left hook, and I feel I did the same with Lewis' right hand. I gave him a lot of different looks. I didn't run from him. I just confused him. I let him know I wasn't afraid of him. He tried to stare me down. He talked to me, but nothing fazed me. I wasn't leaving South Africa without the title.

The Ring: Let's talk about the knockout punch. Were you setting Lewis up for the right hand, or did you just see an opening and fire?

HR: I was trying to set him up for the right because I felt like I'd hurt him earlier in the round. I was off-balance when I hit him with the first right, and he didn't come right back. And that's not Lennox's m.o. He tries to get you any chance he gets. So I felt that the first punch had hurt him. Any time Lennox doesn't fire right back, it's because you've landed a good shot. I wanted to do it again to see just how much damage I'd done. I really wanted to hit him in the center of the ring, but he almost ran over to the corner. When he backed himself up, he had his hand

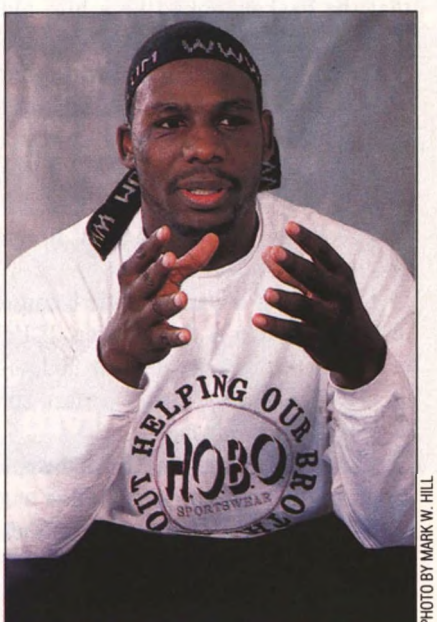

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

"I feel like Mike Tyson is the guy that can make legitimate everything I did in South Africa. I believe there are still going to be a lot of naysayers. Tyson is the type of name that brings even more credibility."

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GREENHILL

Baltimore's Mayor Martin O'Malley hosted a celebration for the new champion at city hall. That's Rahman's wife, Crystal, on the far left, trainer Adrian Davis between The Rock and the mayor, and daughter Amirah on the far right.

up, but he was protecting his temple. His chin was wide open, and I couldn't miss it. Did you ever hear Michael Jordan say that the basket looks like a big, old round bucket? Well, I saw this big, old target on his chin, and all I had to do was throw the right hand. And I did just that. I threw it, and it landed. It was a clean shot, right on the chin—and it was over.

The Ring: Was it the best punch you've ever landed?

HR: Even if it wasn't, it was because of the magnitude of the situation. If I'd have done that to some guy with 30 losses, it could have been picture perfect, but wouldn't have meant much.

The Ring: Did you think Lewis might get up?

HR: Well, I figured that if he does get up, it was going to be the end of Lennox. I was prepared to let go everything I had for the rest of that round. I felt that in the condition he was in, if he did struggle up, we'd really hurt him bad.

The Ring: As it turned out, he didn't even come close to beating the count.

HR: That's the difference between what I did to Lennox and what Oliver McCall did. It's debatable whether or not he could have continued against McCall. Personally, I thought it was a good stoppage, but I've heard HBO commentators say that Lennox was cheated out of the opportunity [to come back] and that it was a bad stoppage. But the way we did it, there was no doubt. It was absolute. He was knocked out. No TKO. Knocked out! In fact, I heard him in the corner saying, "What happened? Is it over?" We went there on a mission, and we completed it successfully.

The Ring: Can you describe the feeling you had when the referee counted Lewis out, and you knew you were the heavyweight champion?

HR: I just felt like, now it's on. I became the hunted. Now they're coming to get me.

The Ring: That's the first thing you thought about?

HR: That was the first thing I thought about, because I expected to win the fight. It wasn't a big surprise to me. I was excited that it was over and that I'd won in the fashion that I did, but I said to myself, *Now they're coming to get me.* Now, everybody is going to line up to get me, and I have to raise the level of my own game.

The Ring: Did Lennox say anything to you after the fight?

HR: He said "good fight" and that he hoped I'd give him the rematch. He offered no excuses, so I felt like he was a good champion.

The Ring: What did you do afterward to celebrate?

HR: Right after the fight, I went and made prayer. I felt that Allah had given me the victory, and I wanted to fulfill my obligation.

The Ring: How much did your faith help you?

HR: I believe my faith checked me a couple of times with the misfortunes I had. I was under the impression that it was all me. I can beat these guys. I can do this. I can do that. But I know that there is no power, no strength without Allah. I have to give credit where credit belongs, and it's not me. I believe that God uses people as vehicles, and if He chooses me to drive this vehicle, then I have to accept the responsibility and carry on with it.

The Ring: I understand that there were fans waiting for you at the Baltimore airport when you got back.

HR: Actually, we missed our flight (from New York to Baltimore) coming

(Continued on page 88)

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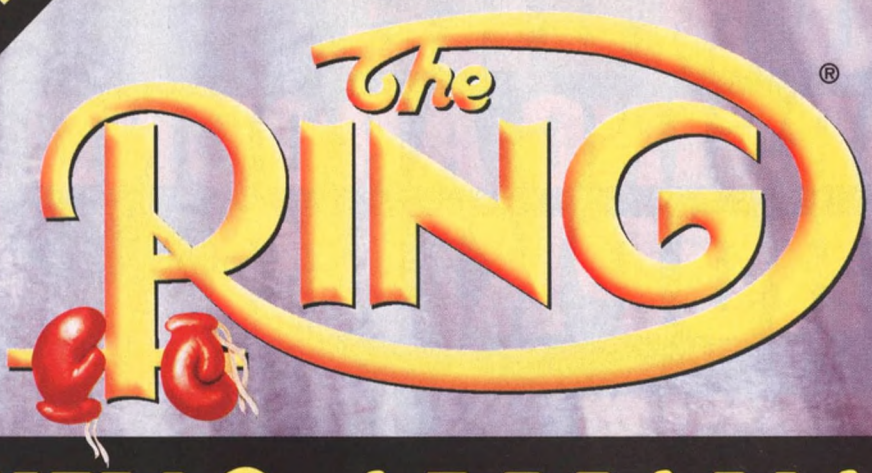

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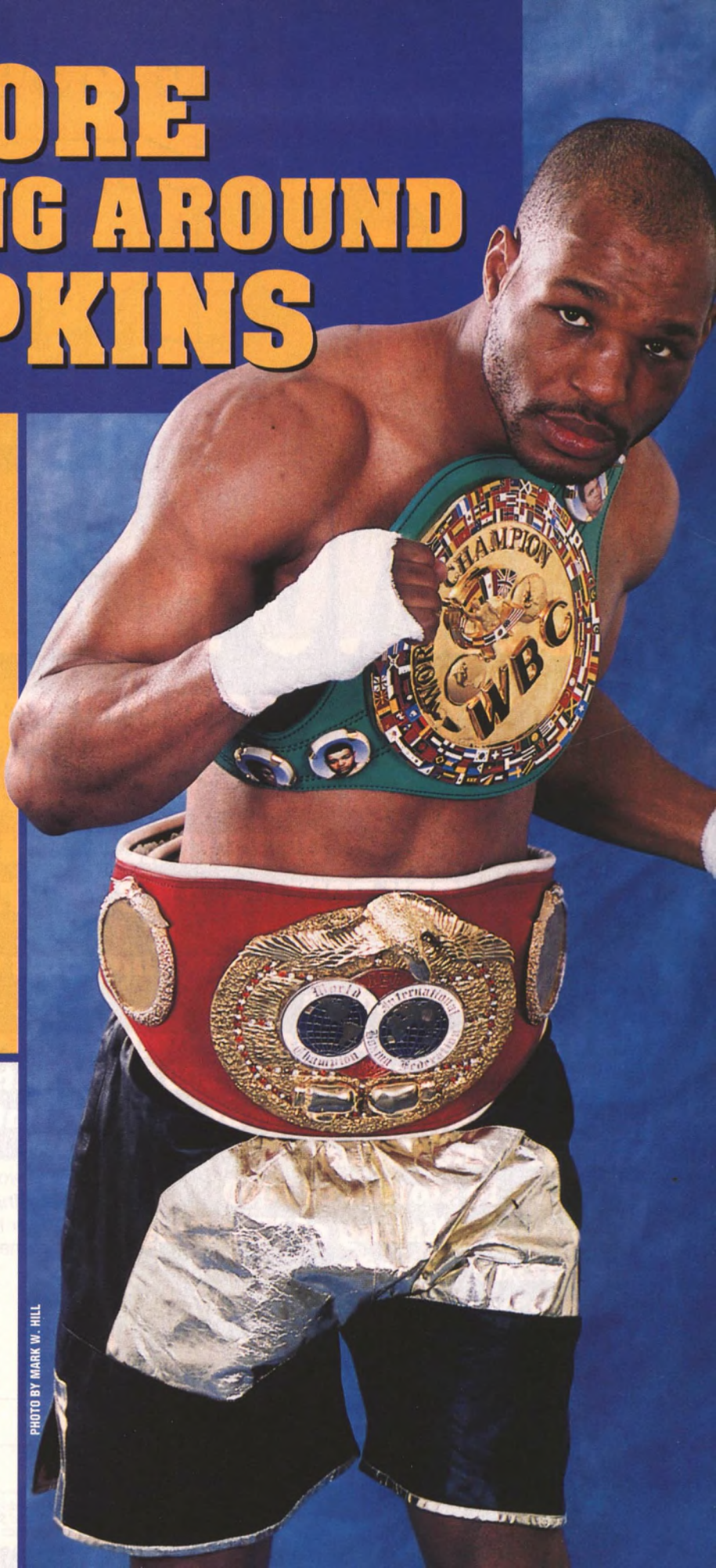


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

By Eric Raskin

Don King's vocabulary extends well beyond the confines of Noah Webster's dictionary, and most of the words he invents are merely superfluous superlatives. But every now and then, King conjures up a term worth conjuring up. Such was the case as he stood before the assembled press after the Bernard Hopkins-Keith Holmes fight on April 14 and explained what makes his "Middleweight World Championship Series" such an innovative concept—at least by boxing's standards.

"We're not doing it by manipulation

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Hopkins takes the fight to Keith Holmes, something he was forced to do because Holmes was so reluctant to be aggressive himself. Hopkins won a wide unanimous decision and the WBC middleweight title.

and maneuvering," King said of the effort to crown an undisputed middleweight champion. "We're doing it by *meritocracy*."

What a novel concept: a governing system where accomplishment is valued over affiliation. By the laws of meritocracy, George W. Bush never would've ridden his daddy's coattails to the highest office in the land, Michael Corleone never would've named brother-in-law Carlo his consiglieri over Tom Hagen, and Vaughn Bean never would've fought for a piece of the heavyweight title (much less fought for it twice).

Hopkins, the longtime IBF and newly crowned WBC champion at 160 pounds, has been doing it by meritocracy all along. A working-class hero, an underdog of sorts even when he's the overwhelming favorite, Hopkins has had to earn everything he's gotten in boxing, and many would say he deserves even more than he currently possesses. Through 12½ years as a professional fighter, nearly six years as a world champion and the consensus top middleweight, and a dozen successful title defenses, Hopkins had never received a million-dollar purse. For a bit of perspective, remember that featherweight Prince Naseem Hamed made $2-million for his HBO debut in 1997.

But the Middleweight World Championship Series is finally changing things for the 36-year-old warrior from the mean streets of Philadelphia and the cold floors of Graterford Prison. He pocketed $1.05-million, and the WBC belt, by fighting Holmes in the first semifinal of the MWCS. He stands to earn considerably more than that in the September 15 finals, when he headlines his first pay-per-view against the winner of the other semifinal between Felix Trinidad and William Joppy.

Victory on that night would garner him the Sugar Ray Robinson trophy and THE RING's undisputed championship belt, make him the first undisputed middleweight champion since Sugar Ray Leonard outpointed Marvin Hagler in '87, and clear the road for more multimillion-dollar fights. After years of fighting the good fight in hopes of being paid what he believed he was worth, Hopkins, thanks to King and the MWCS, could suddenly be buried under an avalanche of cash. But Hopkins says money is not the most important thing to him, and he says it with a conviction that makes you believe him.

"I care about legacy," Hopkins said after the Holmes fight. "I want to be known more for being a great champion than for the money. Don't get me wrong, I want to be paid for my labor. But why are we talking about Robinson today? Because of what he did yesterday. Doing this, no one

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Is Hopkins a dirty fighter? This right hand appears to be just below Holmes' beltline, but as "The Executioner" pointed out after the fight, Holmes wore his trunks awfully high.

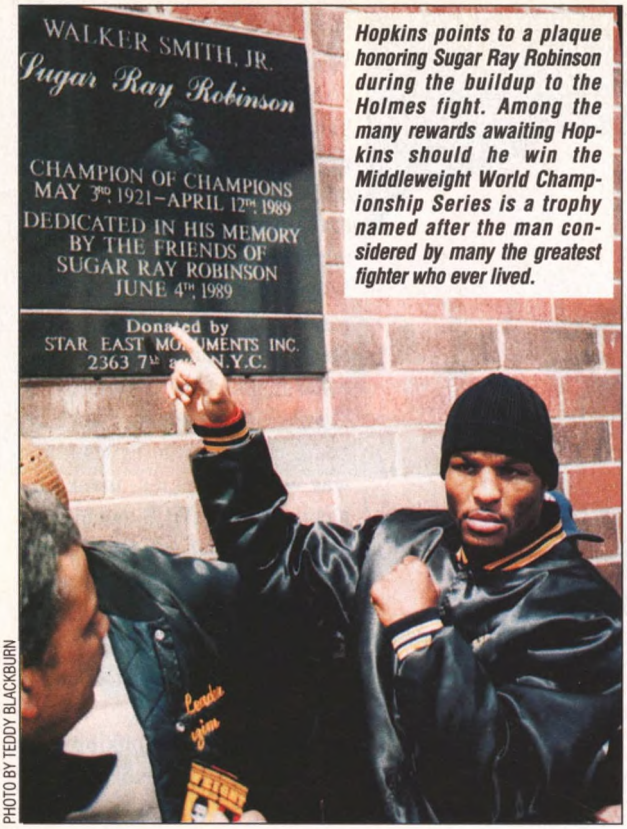


PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Hopkins points to a plaque honoring Sugar Ray Robinson during the buildup to the Holmes fight. Among the many rewards awaiting Hopkins should he win the Middleweight World Championship Series is a trophy named after the man considered by many the greatest fighter who ever lived.

can deny me a spot in the Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, five years after I retire. That's what keeps me going."

The significance of Hopkins' bid to win the MWCS, not only to his own legacy but to the sport of boxing, cannot be ignored. With the victory over Holmes, "The Executioner" passed Hagler and moved into second place on the all-time middleweight title defense list with 13. Should he succeed again on September 15, he will tie legendary Argentine Carlos Monzon's division record. He also will become undisputed champion of boxing's second most historically glamorous division, and he will join Lennox Lewis and Roy Jones as the only fighters to unify the WBA, WBC, and IBF belts in the last 10 years.

As much as the boxing world may despise Don King, he is the man who has finally made all these things possible for Hopkins. King, in typically hyperbolic fashion, equated signing a promotional contract with the headstrong Hopkins to the effort that went into the drafting and signing of the U.S. Constitution some 214 years earlier, but Lou DiBella, the former HBO exec who now serves as Hopkins' adviser, said it really wasn't that complicated.

"Once Bernard made up his mind that the tournament presented the greatest opportunity to him, it didn't take long to make a deal with King. It just took a while to get him to that conclusion," DiBella said. "We tried to work out a fight with Roy Jones, but it fell through. We also thought David Reid would be a big fight for him, but David didn't look good against Kirino Garcia. So the tournament really became the greatest opportunity, and Bernard signed with King. Bernard has been treated, so far, with complete respect by King. And Bernard will never make less than a million dollars fighting for Don King."

According to Hopkins, the oft-vilified King's middleweight tournament wasn't even spawned by selfishness or greed. Though he phrased it in the form of a joke—Hopkins' press conferences don't always seem far removed from nightclub comedy acts—The Executioner suggested after the Holmes fight that King had put the MWCS together for purely noble reasons.

"You see someone doing something for boxing here," Hopkins said. "It can't be for money, because he has all the money in the world."

One person who wasn't doing anything particularly helpful to boxing in the MWCS was Holmes, who came in as the tournament's unofficial fourth seed and fought as though he was happy just to have qualified. Holmes claimed that Hopkins' head banged into his left eye in the first round and gave him double vision the rest of the way, but is that reason enough to go into survival mode for the remaining 11 rounds? The excuse certainly doesn't hold up when your opponent is Hopkins, a man who suffered a separated shoulder against Antwun Echols in his previous fight and went on to knock his man out with one hand.

The southpaw Holmes, 157½, Washington, D.C., edged out the opening round on THE RING's scorecard by being busier than Hopkins with his jab, but it was difficult to give the defending WBC titlist any points after that. Hopkins, 159, staggered Holmes with a right hand in the third round and followed up with the first of many effective body combinations. By the end of that round, it was obvious that Holmes wasn't really thinking about winning, and

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

A series of hooks to the head and body in the 11th round had Holmes in serious trouble, but Hopkins wasn't able to put him away as he promised he'd do beforehand. "I didn't think my performance was bad. I just think I lied," Hopkins quipped after the fight.

ONE OF PHILLY'S FINEST?

I may leave this place tomorrow
But my soul is here to stay
In the town that rocked the nation
Philadelphia, PA
—The Hooters

That lyric from the once-popular Philadelphia rock band describes quite accurately how Bernard Hopkins feels about his hometown. He may live in Newark, Delaware, now, but he'll always be a Philly fighter.

Few fight towns in the world have a history as rich as Philadelphia's. Though they weren't all born in Philly, the likes of Joe Frazier, Tommy Loughran, Bob Montgomery, Battling Levinsky, Matthew Saad Muhammad, Midget Wolgast, Benny Bass, Harold Johnson, Joey Giardello, George Benton, "Gypsy" Joe Harris, Bennie Briscoe, Lew Tendler, and Jeff Chandler all called the city home during their fighting days. And though it isn't the world's premier breeding ground for champions anymore, Hopkins is proud to keep the hard-hooking, blood-and-guts tradition of Philadelphia alive.

Philly greats Gypsy Joe Harris and Smokin' Joe Frazier

As he closes in on possible middleweight history, it's intriguing to wonder how "The Executioner" will be remembered in Philly fight lore. Naturally, a lot depends on what happens in the finals of the unification tournament. But as he stands right now, where does Hopkins rank? Opinions among veterans of the Philadelphia fight fraternity vary.

"I don't think he's in the top 10 of all-time, but he probably makes the top 20, just on longevity," said longtime Philly promoter J Russell Peltz. "I would say he's probably the best Philly fighter since Jeff Chandler retired in '84. But I don't know if Bernard could have beaten the middleweights from the '70s, guys like Briscoe and Willie 'The Worm' Monroe. I'm not taking anything away from him, he's a good fighter, but who's the best fighter he's beaten? Antwun Echols? Those guys from the '70s didn't win the title, but it's a different sport today. Could Bernard have beaten Carlos Monzon, or Emile Griffith, or Rodrigo Valdes? Probably not. You're not talking about Ames, Iowa; you're talking about Philly. There's too much history in Philly to rank Bernard Hopkins in the top 10 at this point."

Philadelphia-bred trainer Al Mitchell disagrees, placing Hopkins in the city's top 10 without hesitation.

"I would say he's right up there in the second tier of Philadelphia fighters," Mitchell said. "The first tier includes guys like Frazier and Gypsy Joe, but Bernard's right alongside guys like Saad Muhammad. He's not the most talented guy, but, like Bennie, he's so mentally tough. You go low on him, he goes low on you—that's a Philly fighter. He uses all the tools he's got. After all these years, he's still the champ."

Hopkins says his legacy amongst Philadelphia fighters is tremendously important, and that he wants to be talked about when he retires the same way his heroes are perpetually discussed by Philly fight fans now. And he believes if he wins the Middleweight Championship Series, some downtown redecorating will be in order.

"They could take the Rocky statue out of there," the champ said of the monument to Sylvester Stallone's famous character that resides in front of the First Union Spectrum, "and put Bernard Hopkins with the executioner mask on down there."

A top-10 Philly fighter? Arguably. A top-10 Philly character? Definitely.

—ER

his clinching grew more and more excessive as the bout wore on.

"I was holding, but that's my style," said the 32-year-old Holmes, 35-3 (23). "If you're doing something I'm not agreeing on, I'm gonna hold you."

That something Holmes wasn't agreeing on was getting punched, and Hopkins was giving him plenty of reason to be disagreeable. With the 6'2" Holmes barely using his jab, Hopkins got inside easily, and while Holmes tried to tie him up, the IBF champ kept his arms churning, taking aim at and often below Holmes' belt line. Referee Steve Smoger took a point from Hopkins for a low right hand in the fifth and warned him again in the sixth, eighth, and 12th, but Smoger was wise to Holmes' thespianism and never seemed close to actually disqualifying The Executioner.

With Holmes holding constantly, Hopkins couldn't quite finish him off, though he came close with a series of left hooks in the 11th round that had the crowd of 4,223 at The Theater at Madison Square Garden riled up. In the end, Hopkins, 39-2-1 (28) with 1 no-contest, had to settle for a unanimous decision win by scores of 117-110 (Larry Hazzard Jr.), 118-109 (George Colon), and 119-108 (Tom Kaczmarek).

Afterward, Hopkins turned into Henny Youngman, answering questions about the fight with a torrent of one-liners:

"I said I was going to knock him out in the eighth or ninth round, and I didn't do that. I didn't think my performance was bad. I just think I lied.

"Was it my perfect performance? No. Am I gonna be better next time? Yes. There's no other southpaws in the tournament. That'll help.

"Keith Holmes realized he couldn't hurt me. My mother's 255 pounds. I know if I can take her left hook, I can take anybody's left hook in boxing.

"I didn't throw too many low blows, I just think the guy had turtleneck shorts on. If the man brings a turtleneck into the ring, what does he expect me to do?"

Actually, Bernard, no matter what the man's wearing, you're still supposed to keep your punches above his waist. Hopkins is developing an increasingly troubling habit of fouling in close when he senses the ref can't see what he's doing, something he also did plenty of against Echols last December, frustrating his challenger into bodyslamming him and causing the separated shoulder. Though he shows no physical signs of slipping—Hopkins is as fast, as strong, and as mobile as ever—his reliance on dirty tactics makes you wonder if he's trying to compensate for something. The debate rages on as to whether or not Hopkins is intentionally bending the rules as far as he can, but one thing's for certain: If he fights habitual low blow thrower Trinidad in the finals, the dirty stuff could, one way or another, decide the fight.

"My advice to Bernard if he's fighting Tito Trinidad is you have to be rough and tumble, but you also have to be careful, because Trinidad's a superstar and they will disqualify you if you give them an opportunity," DiBella said. "But I don't accept that Bernard's a dirty fighter. He's a smart, veteran fighter who won't let anybody push him around."

Indeed, Hopkins usually is the one who ends up doing the pushing, and there's little reason to doubt that he can still be doing it when he's pushing 40. And if he becomes undisputed middleweight champion, there may be enough opportunities out there to last him several years. Hopkins believes lighter fighters like Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas will be compelled to move up a few pounds for the opportunity to win the unified 160-pound crown. And DiBella is certain that a rematch to Hopkins' 1993 loss to Jones will finally be made, which would surely make The Executioner happy.

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Wearing the Executioner mask, Hopkins poses with his new promoter Don King after unifying two-thirds of the middleweight championship. After 12 years as a pro, Hopkins is finally getting the opportunities he deserves, thanks to King.

"I want Roy Jones more than anything," Hopkins said. "Last time, he ran and I couldn't catch him, but I've got better track shoes now. Roy don't want a busted lip, or a busted eardrum, or a busted nose. Roy Jones has gotten comfortable. We know Roy can fight. We know he has great reflexes. But I'm talking about the man in Roy.

"I am willing to fight anyone after this tournament's over and go into retirement a multimillionaire. That's my goal: From rags to riches, and not back to rags. And when I'm done fighting, I want to get into boxing as a businessman. I'm gonna eventually take Don King's spot—only I'm not gonna wear my hair like his."

Hopkins made that crack about King's hair just to amuse the press, but surely he knows as well as anyone that boxing immortality isn't reached by having an outrageous hairstyle. It isn't reached by having a pretty face, or a chart-topping CD, or an elaborate ring entrance, or a partnership with Michael Jordan. Legends are decided by meritocracy, which is why the Middleweight World Championship Series is such a great thing for Hopkins, and for the sport of boxing. ■

GET READY FOR SOME RED-HOT ACTION!

THE RING Previews Four Summer Sizzlers

Baseball players are often referred to as the boys of summer, but those sweltering July and August nights are also an ideal time for boxing. Promoters are always searching for dates to schedule their big fights without conflicting with some other major sporting event, thus maximizing profits. What better time than the summer? The NBA and NHL playoffs are over with, the NFL hasn't started yet, there's no March Madness or college Bowls, and if you're obsessed with Tiger Woods, at least he's in the clubhouse by the time boxing comes on in the evening hours. All that promoters have to worry about is baseball, but let's face it, they're not worrying too hard until October rolls around.

Boxing's suits are making the most of the light summer sports schedule this year, scheduling quality fights on HBO, Showtime, or pay-per-view nearly every weekend. On July 7, HBO airs only the second cruiserweight fight in network history, Vassiliy Jirov vs. James Toney. The following Saturday, Showtime fires back with a much-anticipated junior lightweight showdown between Acelino Freitas and Joel Casamayor. On July 28, TVKO pay-per-view offers up one of boxing's biggest stars, Roy Jones, against the exciting and unbeaten Julio Gonzalez. And a week later, HBO gives us an intriguing clash between two world champions, Paulie Ayala and Bones Adams.

As for July 21, the only Saturday in that five-week stretch not mentioned, THE RING'S pound-for-pound king, Sugar Shane Mosley, happens to be fighting. The only problem is that his opponent was still up in the air as of press time, limiting our preview to the simple statement that Mosley's a solid bet to dazzle and win. But the other four fights are all explored in-depth in this special section, including predictions on each fight from our staff.

If you'd rather watch the boys of summer, that's your prerogative. But the brawls in baseball are just too few and far between for our taste. The men of summer will be in the boxing ring, where you can forget about seeing a no-hitter. More likely, these four fights just might provide a mid-summer Grand Slam for boxing fans.

VASSILIY JIROV vs. JAMES TONEY

In the new Muhammad Ali bio flick starring Will Smith, James Toney plays the role of Joe Frazier. Apparently, they weren't casting according to fighting style, because Toney's a slick cutie with a tendency to be lazy, whereas Frazier was an aggressive puncher with a work ethic to make James Brown blush.

In fact, if fighting style were all that mattered, Vassiliy Jirov, whom Toney will challenge for the IBF cruiserweight title in a minor league baseball stadium on Coney Island on July 7, would be much better suited for the role of Frazier. Jirov hooks to the body like Frazier did, chugs forward at all times, and compliantly sponges up a couple of shots in order to land one. And like Frazier, Jirov is seldom in a bad fight.

Jirov's defense against Toney, the biggest fight of the young Kazakh's career, could be his most thrilling yet. Toney is a boxer, but not a runner, and he's not tall enough as a cruiserweight to try to pick Jirov apart from the outside even if he wanted to. Jirov is a puncher, not a mauler, and he won't just flail away amateurishly at his tricky target. Jirov and Toney will stand and trade, but not in a crude way. With his subtle moves, Toney will try to make "The Russian Tiger" miss and counter him, while Jirov will hope his punching power makes its mark on Toney and acts as the defense he doesn't really have.

Jirov's first three title bouts, against Arthur Williams, Dale Brown, and Saul Montana, all followed a similar pattern: The opponent hits Jirov almost at will, is roughly even on the scorecards midway through the fight, then collapses from the accumulation of bodyshots in the later rounds. Supporters of Toney will assert, and rightly so, that "Lights Out" is 10 times more skilled than Williams, Brown, or Montana, so it is conceivable that he could hit Jirov whenever he wants without taking much punishment in return.

But lately Jirov's been on a tear. His last five fights have gone a total of seven rounds, and though some of the opposition was horrid, mandatory challenger Alex Gonzales and veteran contender Terry McGroom were both expected to last longer than a single round. McGroom, in fact, went 10 rounds with Toney a year earlier and lost a disputed majority decision. Jirov took him out with a single bodyshot in 82 seconds.

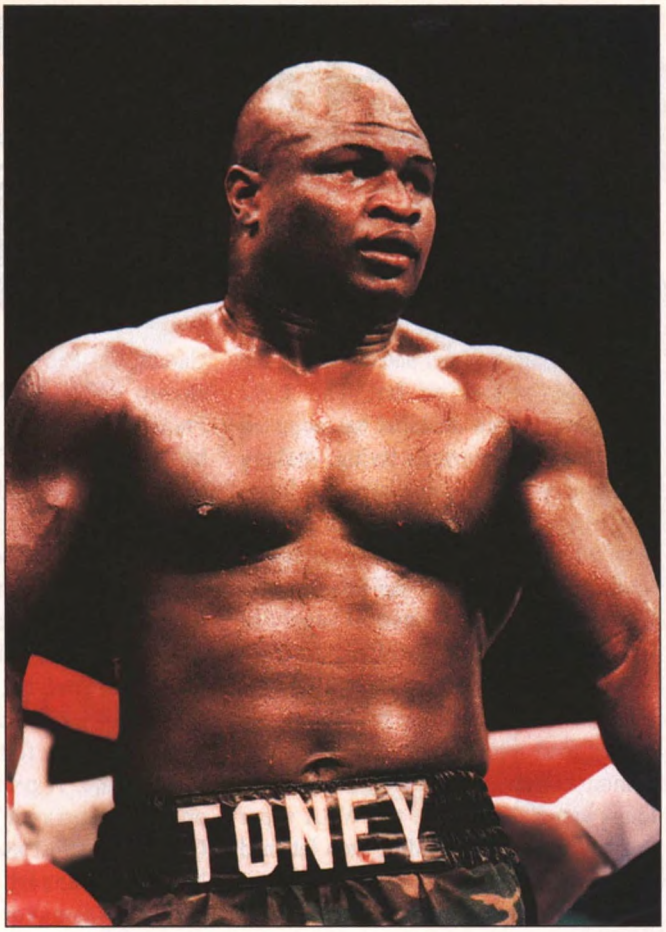
Clearly, Jirov is the naturally bigger, stronger man, as Toney was at his best as a middleweight nearly a decade ago. Interestingly, since his return as a so-called cruiser in March '99, Toney has never really been a cruiserweight, fighting at 195 pounds or above in his six fights since then. Maybe, then, he'll weaken himself making 190. Or maybe he'll actually get himself in shape making 190, thus sparing us a replay of his lethargic performance against McGroom.

Either way, this probably won't be confused for a scene from the movie Toney's starring in. We shouldn't expect Ali-Frazier here. But we could well be looking at the best and most significant cruiserweight fight in 15 years, and maybe even a thrill ride worthy of the Coney Island setting.

THE MATCHUP

VASSILIY JIROV	JAMES TONEY
RECORD	**RECORD**
28-0 (26)	61-4-2 (39)
AGE	**AGE**
27	32
HEIGHT	**HEIGHT**
6'2"	5'10½"
REACH	**REACH**
74"	74"
TITLES HELD	**TITLES HELD**
IBF cruiserweight (1999-present)	IBF middleweight (1991-1992) IBF super middleweight (1993-1994)
BEST PERFORMANCES	**BEST PERFORMANCES**
KO 7 Arthur Williams, 1999 KO 10 Dale Brown, 1999 KO 1 Terry McGroom, 2001	KO 11 Michael Nunn, 1991 W 12 Mike McCallum, 1992 KO 9 Iran Barkley, 1993

Since winning the IBF cruiserweight crown in 1999, Jirov has earned a reputation as one of the game's best bodypunchers. Will his attack to the midsection wear down the better boxing Toney?



Toney has packed on a lot of pounds since his days as IBF middleweight and super middle champion. Can the man who once topped many pound-for-pound lists whip himself into top shape for his showdown with Jirov?

STAFF PICKS

Nigel Collins: Jirov W 12

"There's no reason to think that Toney has rediscovered the discipline required to get himself into top shape after all these years of overindulgence and sloth. Jirov's busier workrate carries the day."

Eric Raskin: Jirov W 12

"In shape and fully motivated, Toney should box rings around Jirov. But I don't think Toney will want it badly enough, especially after tasting a few of Jirov's hooks to the body. Look for Toney to stand still too much and drop a unanimous decision in a highly entertaining fight."

Joe Santoliquito: Jirov KO 8

"Jirov has too much punching power for the rusty former champion. Toney is going to get caught standing still, and when he does, lights out."

William Dettloff: Toney W 12

"These guys are made for one another. Jirov loves guys he can outwork, and Toney loves guys who come to him and throw lots of leather. The temptation is to go with Jirov, but I can't help recalling how easily Williams and Brown hit him. If they can get to him, a real pro like Toney should carve him up."

JOEL CASAMAYOR vs. ACELINO FREITAS

Joel Casamayor has had it easy in the United States so far. The 1992 Olympic gold medalist has adjusted quite well to American living, making more money than he could have ever imagined before defecting from Cuba prior to the '96 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Another inducement for the Miami-based fighter has been the bountiful supply of fast food the United States offers.

When he's not zipping his way through the drive-thru, Casamayor has been using the fast-food approach in his boxing development. He beat a weak champion in Jongkwon Baek to take the WBA super featherweight belt last May, then fattened up on an easy defense against Radford Beasley, followed by a minor struggle with chinny Roberto Garcia.

But Casamayor's snug feeling may soon be interrupted. On July 14, the Cuban expatriate puts the WBA title on the line against powerpunching Acelino Freitas in a bout televised by Showtime.

In title defenses against Beasley and Garcia, Casamayor, despite winning, has shown he might be tailor made for Freitas. Despite his sound fundamentals, he takes his share of punches, a weakness brought out especially by the light-hitting Garcia.

Casamayor has become more versatile since Joe Goossen started training him in 1998. During the early years of his pro career, Casamayor had been satisfied to stay outside, relying on his quickness and speed to win. But under Goossen, Casamayor has felt more compelled to trade inside. A prime example came in one of Casamayor's first fights under Goossen, against swarming brawler Jose Noyola in January '99. Forced to slug inside, Casamayor showed durability, going 12 rounds for the first time in winning a unanimous decision. Two years later, he bore the brunt of Garcia's attack for five rounds, before altering the momentum of the fight using the same aggressive tactics.

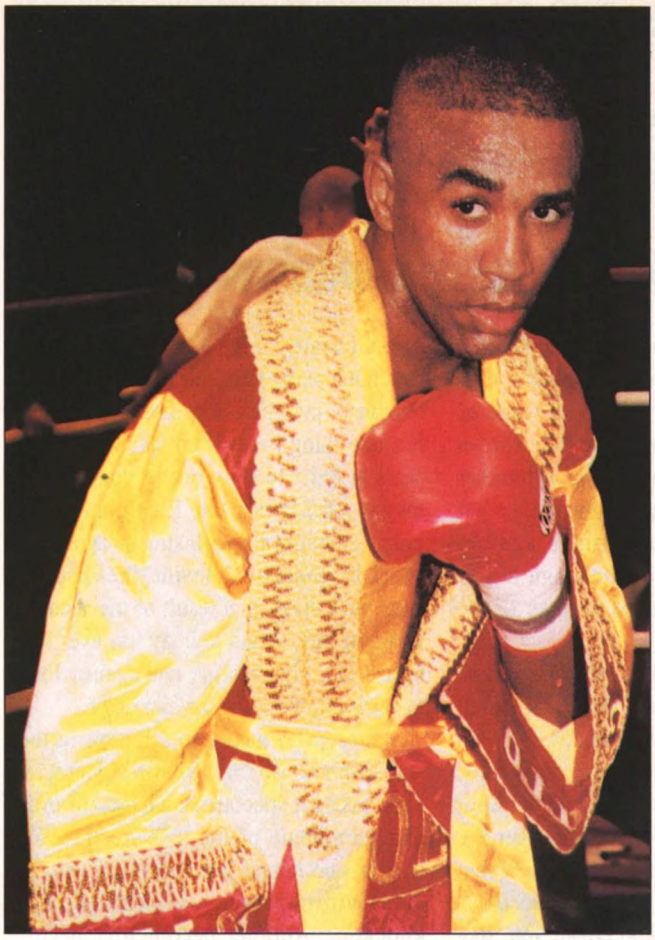
Whether Casamayor will be willing to fight inside against the bullish power of Freitas is another story.

Freitas, the Brazilian knockout artist, has won his first 29 pro bouts inside the distance, dispensing of quality opponents like Lemuel Nelson (KO 2), Carlos Rios (KO 9), and Daniel Alicea (KO 1). He smashed Anatoly Alexandrov in one round to win the lightly regarded WBO junior lightweight title in '99. And since the Alexandrov fight, five of his eight opponents were dismissed in two rounds or less.

At 5'5", Freitas is giving up about two inches to Casamayor, and he may be giving away some quickness to the Cuban, as well. But Freitas has a solid jaw, is a sound technician, and has a tendency to blow out anything that comes within striking distance of his mighty right hand. Casamayor's best strategy is probably to box and stay away, but the lure of tangling with Freitas inside just once could be hard to resist. The same goes for the lure of watching this clash of evenly matched unbeatens.

THE MATCHUP

JOEL CASAMAYOR	ACELINO FREITAS
RECORD	**RECORD**
25-0 (15)	29-0 (29)
AGE	**AGE**
30	25
HEIGHT	**HEIGHT**
5'7"	5'5"
REACH	**REACH**
69"	67"
TITLES HELD	**TITLES HELD**
WBA super featherweight (2000-present)	None
BEST PERFORMANCES	**BEST PERFORMANCES**
W 12 David Santos, 1999	KO 1 Anatoly Alexandrov, 1999
KO 5 Jongkwon Baek, 2000	KO 9 Carlos Rios, 2000
KO 9 Roberto Garcia, 2001	KO 1 Daniel Alicea, 2000



WBA super featherweight champion Casamayor has done well in the USA since leaving his native Cuba, but will he be able to stand up under the thunderous punches of Brazilian knockout artist Freitas?

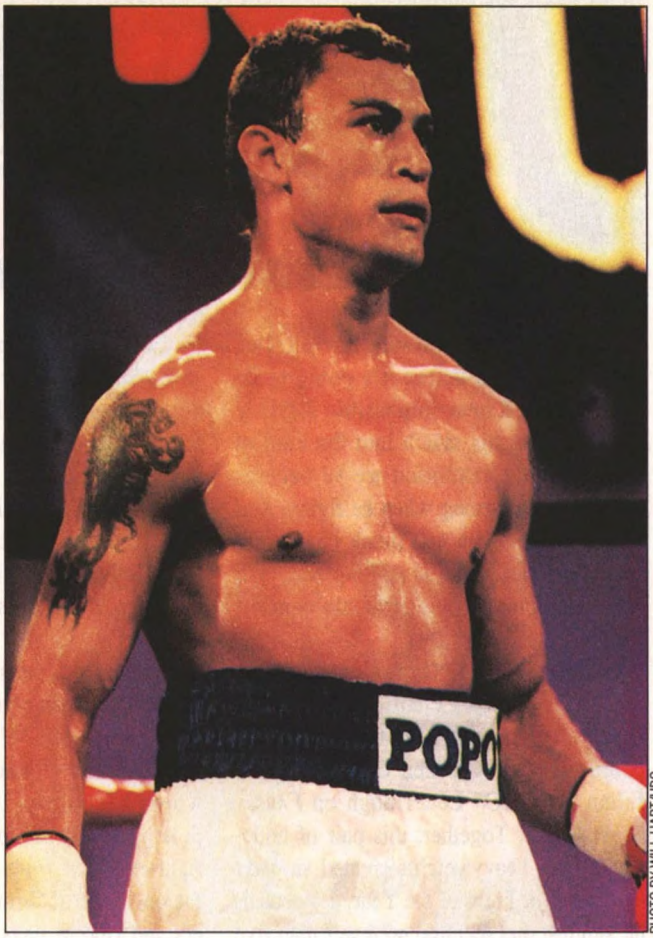


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Freitas has blown away every pro opponent he's faced to date, but he's never before faced anyone who boxes quite as well as Casamayor. Will the Cuban expatriate become knockout victim number 30?

STAFF PICKS

Nigel Collins: Freitas KO 9

"Casamayor is slick, but not unhittable, and Freitas won't have to hit him too often to get the job done."

Eric Raskin: Casamayor KO 10

"Though I feel Casamayor has become overrated, the style and the timing are right for him in this fight. Freitas' wide punches aren't hard to counter, and he's killing himself to make 130 pounds. His chin isn't great either, which is why I like the Cuban to stop him late."

Joe Santoliquito: Freitas KO 7

"If Garcia can give Casamayor fits, just imagine what one hard shot from Freitas can accomplish."

William Dettloff: Freitas KO 11

"History says the boxer beats the puncher, but Casamayor showed just enough vulnerability against Garcia to convince me that Freitas has a good shot. The guy is a legitimate one-punch threat. Casamayor will outbox him for the most of the night, but not all of it."

ROY JONES vs. JULIO GONZALEZ

The folks who manufacture No-Doz won't like it, but it's going to be damned near impossible for Roy Jones to turn this match into the kind of tepid sparring exhibition we've become accustomed to seeing when he fights. And if we're right, you can thank challenger Julio Gonzalez, who, if nothing else, will force Reluctant Roy out of his comfort zone and into a fight.

Until recently, Gonzalez was just another West Coast clubfighter toiling in anonymity, but all that changed on February 2, 2001, when Gonzalez faced Julian "Mr. KO" Letterlough on *Friday Night Fights*. Together, this pair of undefeated light heavyweights created an early candidate for Fight of the Year, a spectacular slugfest that featured no fewer than five knockdowns before Gonzalez emerged victorious via 12-round decision.

Gonzalez, who will challenge Jones for the undisputed 175-pound title on July 28 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, may not be as athletically gifted as some of Jones' recent opponents, but he's shown every indication of being much tougher and far more determined. After all, he got up off the floor three times against Letterlough, and still had enough left to battle back and finish the stronger of the two.

Basically, Jones has been on cruise control since his revenge kayo of Montell Griffin in August '97. Part of that has to do with his vast superiority over opponents, which has allowed him to win without putting out much of an effort. But the fighting styles of his foes have also been a factor. None of them were pressure fighters, the kind of guys who crowd you, stay in your face, and keep coming back for more. Gonzalez will reverse that trend.

Despite a respectable knockout percentage, Gonzalez' biggest drawback is that he's not a particularly hard puncher, which obviously puts him at a distinct handicap. It's one thing to soak up a few of Jones' shots in order to plant one of your own on his jaw, but if that one isn't going to do much damage, it's a losing proposition. Most of Gonzalez' inside-the-distance wins have come as a result of the accumulation of blows, and nobody has ever connected at a high enough rate against Jones to come close to wearing him down.

Jones, who has been slipping farther and farther down the pound-for-pound ratings, needs a spectacular victory in order to regain some of his lost prestige. For him, it's no longer just enough to win. He must win impressively, preferably by knockout. Another perfunctory performance will only result in further scorn being heaped upon the man once widely considered the world's finest fighter.

THE MATCHUP

ROY JONES	JULIO GONZALEZ
RECORD 44-1 (36)	**RECORD** 27-0 (17)
AGE 32	**AGE** 24
HEIGHT 5'11"	**HEIGHT** 6'2"
REACH 74"	**REACH** 79"
TITLES HELD IBF middleweight (1993-1994) IBF super middleweight (1994-1996) WBC light heavyweight (1996-1997; 1997-present) WBA light heavyweight (1998-present) IBF light heavyweight (1999-present)	**TITLES HELD** None
BEST PERFORMANCES W 12 Bernard Hopkins, 1993 W 12 James Toney, 1994 KO 1 Montell Griffin, 1997	**BEST PERFORMANCES** W 8 Reggie Roberts, 1999 KO 9 Jesus Ruiz, 2000 W 12 Julian Letterlough, 2001

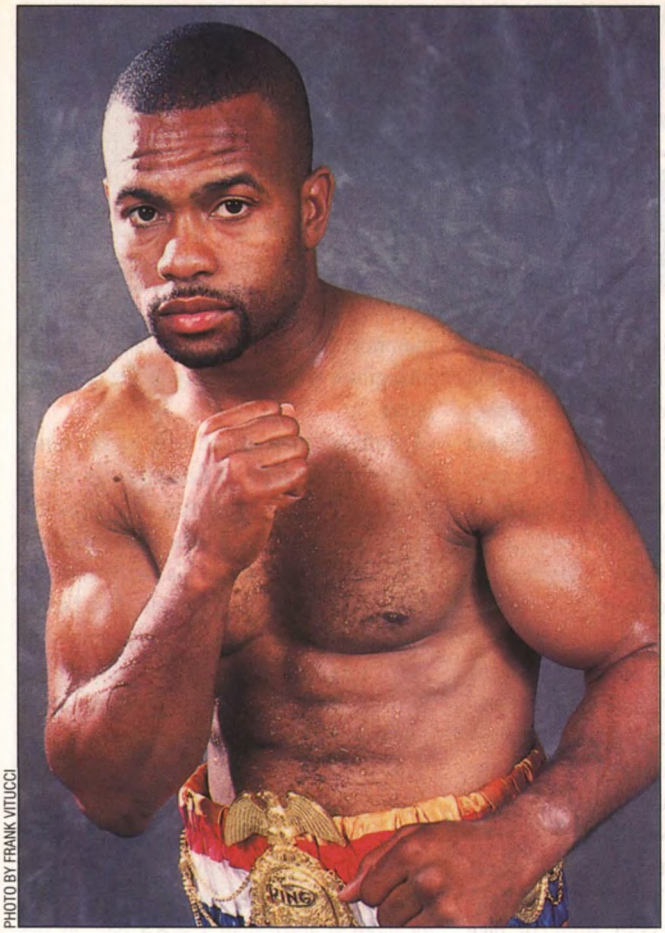


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Jones needs an impressive win to help regain the status he's lost recently due to the unexciting nature of his fights. Is Gonzalez the opponent Reluctant Roy needs to bring out the best in him?

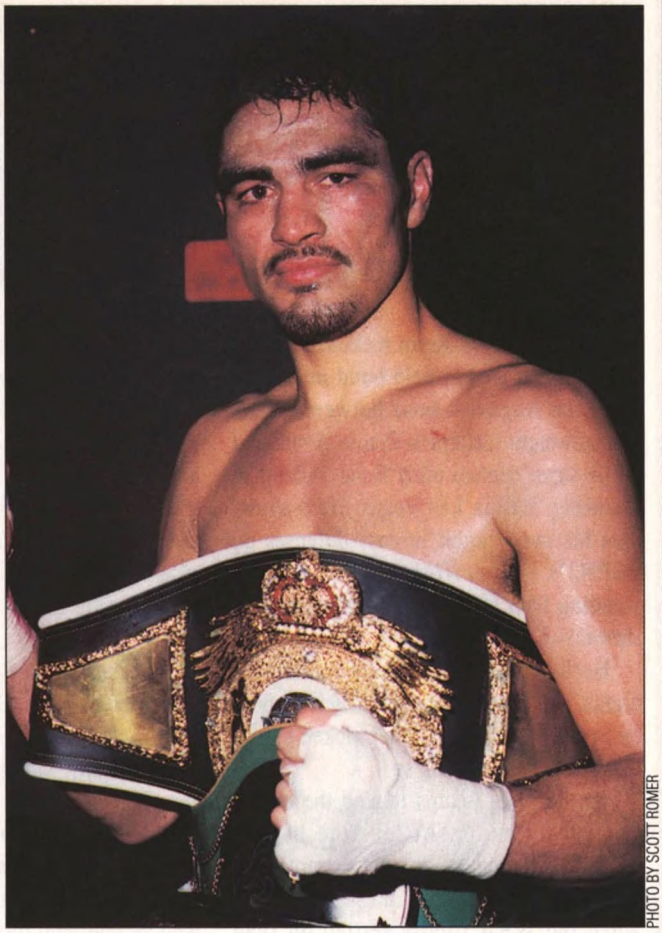


PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

Gonzalez shows off the belts he won in his amazing brawl with Julian Letterlough. Will the undefeated Californian's no-nonsense style force Jones to fight all-out for the first time in several years?

STAFF PICKS

Nigel Collins: Jones KO 6

"Jones finally finds the right opponent to make him look as good as he thinks he is."

Eric Raskin: Jones KO 4

"Seeing how badly Letterlough hurt Gonzalez with single shots, you have to wonder about his chin. This one's totally one-sided, and over quickly."

Joe Santoliquito: Jones KO 8

"Another virtuoso performance by Jones, with the same ongoing theme: Jones dominates, Jones grows bored, Jones eventually decides to end it."

William Dettloff: Jones KO 9

"Gonzalez is a tough guy and a solid fighter. Against Jones—who might finally be tired enough of all the negative talk to show up inspired—that's not enough. He has too many weapons. And Gonzalez knows it going in."

PAULIE AYALA vs. BONES ADAMS

Promoter Bob Arum reckoned he had a great idea to help build interest in the August 4 bout between WBA bantamweight champion Paulie Ayala and WBA super bantam titlist Bones Adams at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. He'd showcase his two champs in easy defenses on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*, thereby whetting fans' appetite for the impending showdown. Bad move, Bob.

Both Adams and Ayala had lousy nights, and although they managed to hold on to their title belts, neither looked particularly impressive doing so.

Of the pair, Adams looked the better, but not by much. At least he had an excuse: His preparation was disrupted by numerous changes in challengers, and when the WBA finally settled on Ivan Alvarez, the one-day fill-in from Colombia turned out to be better than his 18-6 (8) record seemed to indicate. Adams floored Alvarez with a bodyshot in the fourth, but never really found his offensive groove, and had to settle for a lackluster points win by scores of 116-111 and 115-112 (twice).

A week later, on March 30, Ayala looked lucky to retain the title with a contentious decision over Hugo Dianzo, a verdict that left *Friday Night Fights'* ringside commentator Teddy Atlas ranting about boxing's need for a federal commission.

Suddenly, a once-attractive match didn't look so hot. But judging by Adams and Ayala's past history of making entertaining fights, you have to give them the benefit of the doubt and figure their most recent outings were aberrations.

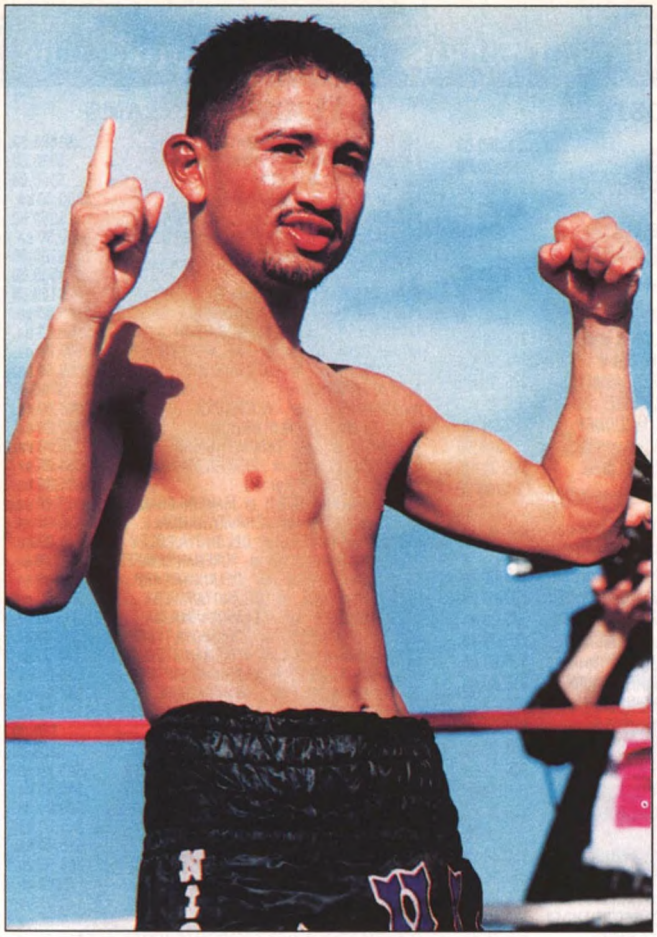
Adams and Ayala match up very evenly. Both are well-schooled technicians who've mastered their craft. Both cut, take a good shot, and have always shown an abundance of courage. Adams tends to be more accurate with his punches, while Ayala is generally busier; neither is a big puncher. So when all is said and done, intangibles will most likely be the deciding factor.

Both are most effective when the other guy comes straight at them, so the victor could very well be the man who lures the other into leading. Ayala accomplished that to a large degree in his two wars with Johnny Tapia, but in Adams, the Texan will be facing a less emotional opponent than Tapia, one who isn't as susceptible to allowing the heat of the moment to throw him off his fight plan.

We can expect a close, hard-fought contest between a couple of proud, battle-hardened little warriors. Fortunes will be fluctuating right up until the final bell, with each having his moments. There's a lot more at stake than a WBA belt, as the winner could easily pack on a few more pounds and go on to fight Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, or maybe even a comebacking Naseem Hamed. ■

THE MATCHUP

PAULIE AYALA	BONES ADAMS
RECORD 32-1 (12)	**RECORD** 41-3-3 (19)
AGE 31	**AGE** 27
HEIGHT 5'5"	**HEIGHT** 5'5"
REACH 66"	**REACH** 66"
TITLES HELD WBA bantamweight (1999-present)	**TITLES HELD** WBA super bantamweight (2000-present)
BEST PERFORMANCES W 12 Johnny Tapia, 1999 W 12 Saohin Sithchai Condo, 1999 W 12 Johnny Tapia, 2000	**BEST PERFORMANCES** W 12 Javier Diaz, 1992 KO by 11 Orlando Canizales, 1993 W 12 Nestor Garza, 2000



Ayala will be moving up from bantamweight to junior feather in an attempt to win his second world title. Can the Ft. Worth favorite erase the memory of the gift decision he got in his last fight by convincingly beating Adams?

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

It took Adams a long time to get to the top, and his showdown with Ayala will bring him his biggest purse to date. Can the pride of Henderson, Kentucky, beat Ayala and go on to other major matches?

STAFF PICKS

Nigel Collins: Adams W 12

"For the most part, Adams refuses to be lured into trench warfare, boxes Ayala from the outside, and lands enough counters to win a close but clear-cut decision."

Eric Raskin: Adams W 12

"You can bet the kids' college tuition on this one going the distance, and the difference will be all the talk about Ayala's run of friendly decisions. Vegas judges often overcompensate for things like that, and Adams will get the nod in a close, tough-to-score fight."

Joe Santoliquito: Adams W 12

"Ayala's luck is about to run out against Bones. He was given a gift decision in the second Tapia fight, and clearly got one against Dianzo. Gift-giving season ends for Paulie right here."

William Dettloff: Adams W 12

"The question is, who will make the other guy come to him? People have Ayala thinking he's a hitter and a strong inside fighter, when in fact he's neither. Plus, he's the bigger name, so he'll feel like he has to carry the fight. And that's precisely what Adams wants."

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CHAVEZ/GAMACHE • MOORER/FOREMAN • DURAN/CAMACHO
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20 THE 20 GREATEST LIGHTWEIGHTS OF ALL-TIME

By William Dettloff

As any fight fan will tell you, this business we have of rating the all-time greats is addicting. They do it in other sports too, of course. You can hear guys debating about who was the better hitter, Mickey Mantle or Willie Mays, or who was more dominant, Wilt Chamberlain or Michael Jordan. It's at the core of what all sport is about: human competition and strength of spirit. It all comes down to that eventually—one human's will and talent matched against another human's will and talent and then, ultimately, against time and against the will and talent and achievements of all those who did the same before him.

The fight game is different though, somehow, at least to us. There is something especially timeless and comforting about debating the merits of great old fighters relative to other fighters, old and contemporary, and rating them beside one another, putting them in order from best to worst, and then explaining why they fall where they do. Maybe it's because fighters reveal more of themselves than any other athletes and therefore are most easily analyzed, judged, and ranked. Maybe it's because we watch them so closely over the years and throughout their careers that we think we know them better than they know themselves.

Whatever the case, on the following pages, THE RING rates the 20 greatest lightweights ever. Note that the ratings are not based solely on who we think would have beaten whom. That question of head-to-head competition and superiority does factor into a fighter's ultimate placement among his contemporaries, but it does so on a smaller level probably than you would like, and only after other factors are considered and calculated. (It could be that using just a head-to-head analysis would produce the same order precisely or at least a similar one, and in a sense that would be perfectly just; remember the axiom, though, "styles make fights.")

Of much greater importance than who would win were they all thrown into a ring together are the following criterion: longevity, quality of opposition, consistency, and performance. Those are the big four. Throw in intangibles, like heart and adaptability if you like, and ability to withstand punishment, or power, or defense. But if a guy is consistently good over a long period of time against high-quality opposition, chances are good he has those things anyway.

Lastly, this is all about lightweights, so anything a fighter did at junior welterweight or featherweight or anywhere else is irrelevant. For the purposes of this analysis, it doesn't matter that Roberto Duran won titles at 147, 154, and 160. Same thing with Pernell Whitaker and Shane Mosley, other multi-division titlists. What they got done at 135 is what matters. They don't exist at any other weight. Maybe you'll agree with most of our placements. Maybe you won't. Enjoy the debate anyway. It's one the fight game's greatest allures.

1 ROBERTO DURAN

104-15 (69)

World Champion 1972-'78

There's a chubby, 50-year-old super middleweight out there fighting eight-rounders who calls himself Roberto Duran. You might be fooled if you look quickly and turn away. He has the jet black hair Duran always had and, in the right light, his eyes look full of menace. Just like Duran. When he doesn't look sad and a little embarrassed, you might catch an evil sneer or some momentary but deep, deep pride. But most of the time you won't see any of that, even if you get to see the guy fight, which is no great pleasure. You won't see it because the guy's not Duran.

We know Duran. He was a tightly bound, highly strung killer who dominated the lightweight division like no other fighter. The Duran we know, the lightweight Duran, probably was the best fighter pound-for-pound for almost a decade. The lightweight Duran defended the title 12 times—scoring 11 knockouts—over a six-year reign. And he didn't just stop guys. He tortured them, he took them apart, he punished them for daring to challenge him. And if all that didn't work, he lumped them up with his elbows and shoulders and whatever else he had because that's how they did it on the streets in Panama City and it worked there. Why not in the ring, too, if he could get away with it? He got away with it too most of the time because he was damned good at it.

Duran was good at everything in the ring. He wasn't as smooth as Benny Leonard or Pernell Whitaker, two legends for whom one could argue placement here, but only if you underestimate Duran. He was a flawless technician, and before you ask what that means exactly, watch some tape of him making guys miss every punch of a four-punch combination, then torturing them to the body. Watch him cut off the ring and corner even the quickest, most nimble lightweights and then rough them up in the corners and on the ropes. Watch him walk in with a jab and a hook then switch southpaw and wing hooks from both sides without missing a beat, seamlessly.

Watch the guys Duran hit—good, tough, skilled guys like Ray Lampkin, Vilomar Fernandez, and Lou Bizzarro—wither and fall, bloody and thoroughly whipped as though they were jumped in the street and robbed. He beat the fight out of them, slowly many times, but one could guess that was because he liked watching them suffer. If they'd have let him, Duran would have carried a switchblade into the ring with him. That's the kind of fighter he was. Watch the gleam in his eyes at the pure joy he got out of the battle, out of the simple act of fighting, out of dominating another man and beating him senseless. He was born to do it. The best ones are.

Esteban DeJesus was a wonderful lightweight whom history will always recall as the first man—and the only lightweight—to beat Duran. It probably ruined his career. Probably DeJesus could have been a much better fighter than he turned out to be, but Duran ravaged him in the returns, stopping him in the rubber match to bring his record to 64-1 (50). It was the last time we saw Duran, really, and forget that he won titles at welterweight, junior middleweight, and even middleweight. Those guys weren't Duran, no more than is the guy we hear about waddling around Panama City clubs today. The lightweight Duran is the only true Duran that's ever existed. There never will be another.

2 BENNY LEONARD

85-5-1 (69) with 121 no-decisions

World Champion 1917-'25

You can debate just about anyone's greatness if you're so inclined and if you have the time. You can debate Rocky Marciano's greatness if you want to, or Jack Dempsey's or Sonny Liston's or Larry Holmes'. You can say Tunney was overrated, or Ketchel was a bum, or that Ali made Frazier. If you try hard enough, you can make almost any argument. Hell, you can argue the true merit of three-quarters of the guys who have plaques hanging in Canastota.

There are a few ring immortals whose greatness you cannot debate. Their credentials are too strong, their greatness too irrefutable: Joe Louis. Sugar Ray Robinson. Muhammad Ali. Jack Johnson. Willie Pep. Archie Moore. Henry Armstrong. Harry Greb. Benny Leonard.

What is it about Leonard that makes his greatness so indisputable? First, look again at his record. Over 200 fights, and just five losses. And of those five losses, three came in the first 12 months of his career. Another came in his very last fight, the famous kayo loss to Jimmy McLarnin. So during the meat of his career—say, 1915 through '24—Leonard lost just once, via foul against Jack Britton in '22 in a bid for the welterweight title.

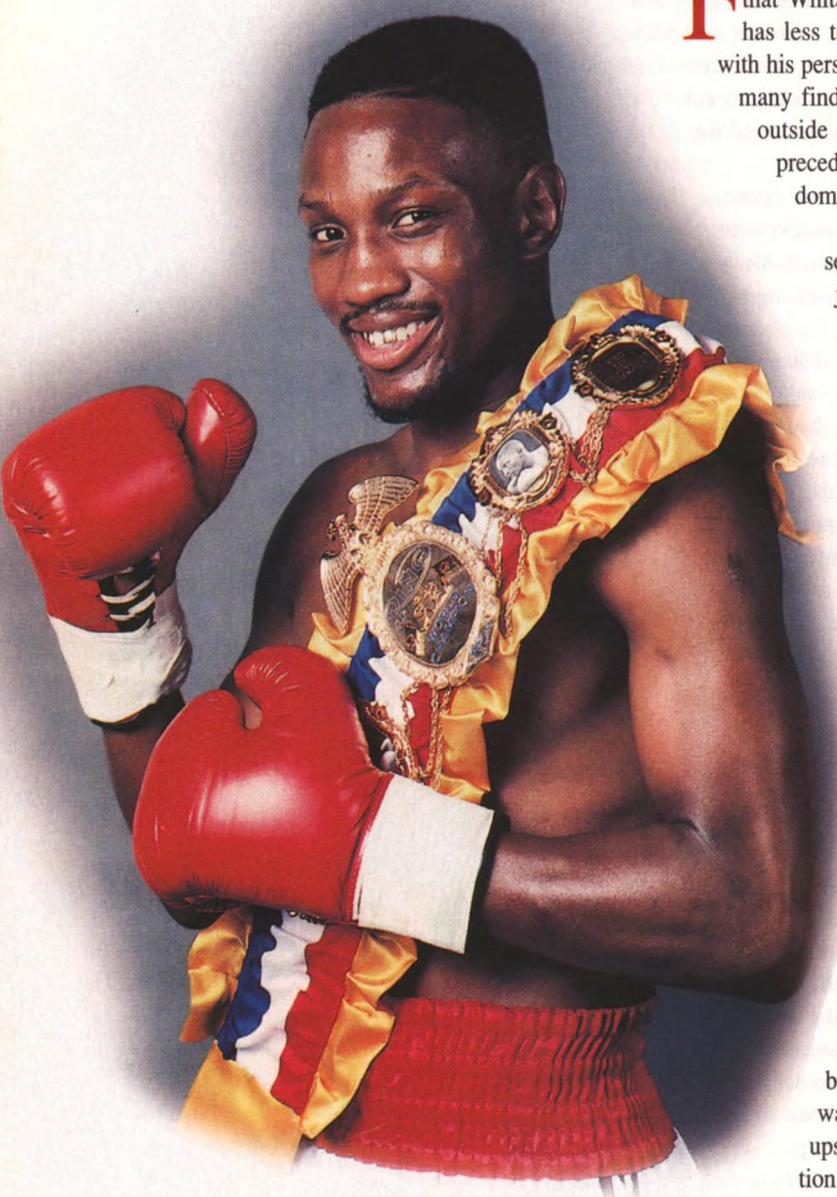
Want more numbers? Try these: In '17, the year he stopped the talented Freddie Welsh in nine to win the title, Leonard fought 29 times. That's a whole career these days. His record that year? 17-0 (17) with 12 no-decisions (all of which he won unofficially in the newspapers). The following year? Much slower: 4-0 (3) with six no-decisions. The year after? 7-0 (7) with 17 no-decisions. You get the picture. Leonard fought a lot and he won a lot, and not the Buck Smith kind of fighting and winning. Leonard was fighting the best lightweights and welterweights in the world and he was beating them up: Johnny Kilbane, Richie Mitchell, Rocky Kansas, Johnny Dundee, Leo Johnson, Eddie Dorsey, Joe Welling, Pal Moran, Johnny Nelson, Britton. The lore says he'd go into fights and have the guy figured out within the first minute, or that he'd take a guy out only after he mussed up Leonard's hair. Maybe it's hogwash, maybe not. Doesn't matter. The guy was a fighting genius.

Don't get bent out of shape that Leonard held the title for eight years and made just six defenses. The guy fought 81 times during the same period, and if you fight that many times, you can't possibly miss anyone. Anyone who wanted a fight with Leonard got a fight with Leonard. The guy fought two or three times a month. The depth and width of Leonard's work is what makes him a true ring immortal and, pound-for-pound, one of the greatest fighters ever. Irrefutably.

3 PERNELL WHITAKER

40-4-1 (17)

IBF Champion 1989-'92, WBC Champion 1989-'92, WBA Champion 1990-'92



For whatever reason, you won't find a lot of guys who will admit that Whitaker is one of the best lightweights ever. Probably it has less to do with his fighting ability and talent than it does with his personality, which many find grating, and his style, which many find boring. The case is easily made regardless because outside of Roberto Duran and Benny Leonard, the two who precede him in this compilation, there never has been a more dominant or consistent lightweight.

Consider first: From the time he turned pro with a second-round kayo of Farrain Comeaux in 1984, until just before he decisioned Rafael Pineda to win the IBF junior welterweight title in July 1992, Whitaker went undefeated in 30 fights. (Of course, the record books will tell you he lost a decision to Jose Luis Ramirez in March '88 in his first title shot. Don't believe them. Ramirez knew Whitaker beat him, Whitaker knew it, Don King knew it, and Jose Sulaiman knew it. The judges knew it, too, or should have at least. Whitaker shut him out in a rematch a year later—same as the first time.)

During that 30-fight span, Whitaker unified the lightweight title, made a total of eight defenses, and whipped outright every challenger that could be found. If he lost five rounds during that 30-fight period (not including the first Ramirez fight) it would surprise anyone who followed him closely and watched him dissect and outbox Roger Mayweather, Greg Haugen, Freddie Pendleton, Anthony Jones, Jorge Paez, and even the great Azumah Nelson, among others. He faced anyone who represented even a reasonable challenge. The more dangerous the better. He had no reason to duck anyone.

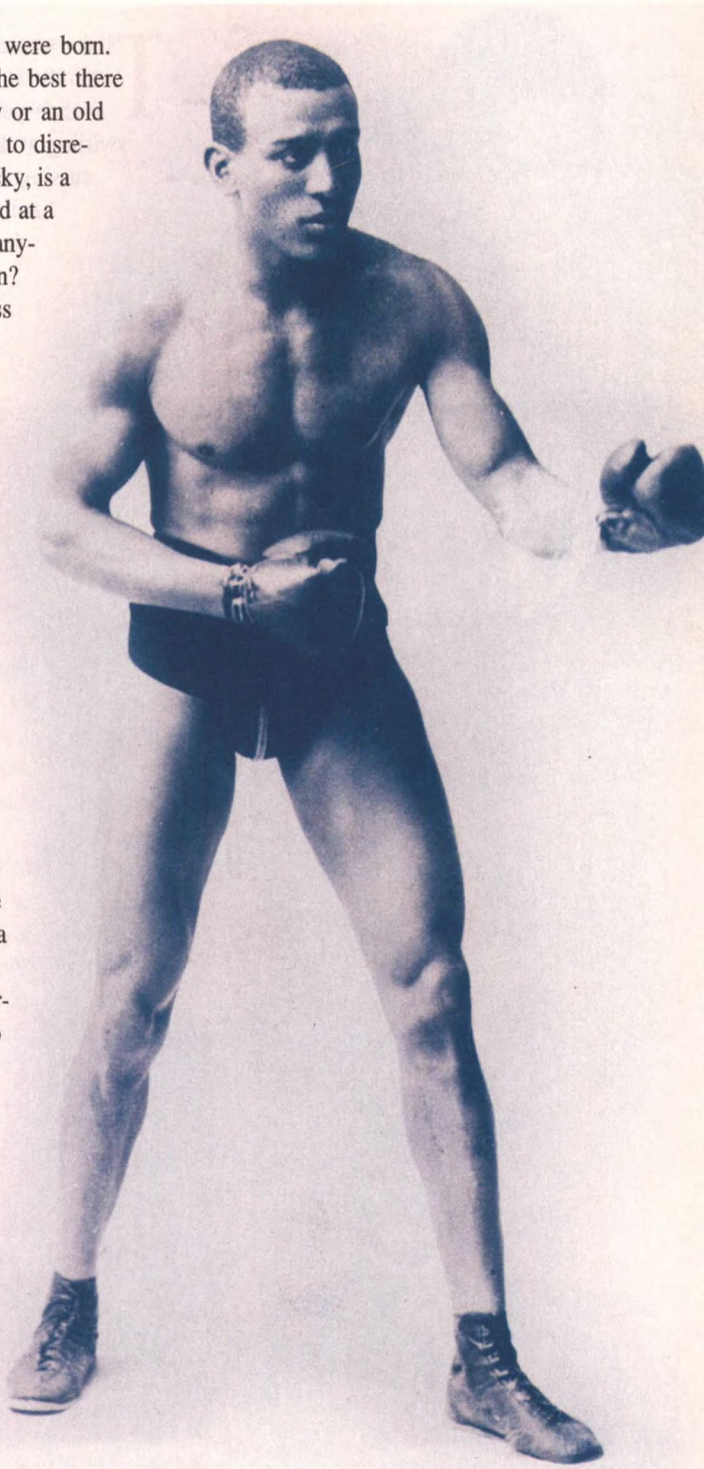
Was it exciting when Whitaker was getting all this business done? Hell no. There never was drama. He was so much better than everyone, any question of an upset dissipated by the second round. Then the only question was whether he would score a knockout. Usually, it was no. Was he a gracious winner? No again. He taunted and mocked everyone in the ring, including Nelson, which seemed at the time to be in especially bad taste, seeing as how Nelson was coming up in weight and already was past his best. But great fighters aren't always nice guys. Get over it.

Even as Whitaker's place in history is diminished by some, there are also those who rank him as the greatest lightweight ever, above Duran and Leonard. You could make the case, but his body of work at 135 isn't big enough. If he had stayed at lightweight for a longer period, if not for the duration of his career, it would be different. He might have pocketed another 10 title defenses, maybe reigned for seven or eight years, maybe more. But some of his best and most important fights—against Julio Cesar Chavez and Buddy McGirt, for example—came at welterweight. Either way, we wouldn't bet against him in a fight against any lightweight on this list. He was that great.

4 JOE GANS

120-8-10 (85) with 18 no-decisions

World Champion 1902-'04, '04-'08



It is easy to dismiss fighters who toiled at their art before we were born. When the old-timers tell us this or that old-time fighter was the best there ever was, sometimes we attribute it to senility or melancholy or an old man's refusal to accept anything contemporary as good. It's easy to disrespect the old-time fighters when all we can see of them, if we're lucky, is a cloudy gray and white image of two guys in tights fumbling around at a faster-than-normal speed and never, as far as we can see, landing anything clean. Where's the flying sweat? Where's the slow motion? How are we supposed to tell if the guy can fight? It's easy to dismiss the old-time fighters. It's not easy to dismiss Gans.

How could we dismiss a guy who rose from so-called "Battle Royals" held in his hometown of Baltimore—you know, where a bunch of blindfolded black kids were thrown into a ring and the last one standing won—to lightweight champion of the world and one of the most respected fighters of the century's first half? How could we dismiss a guy who went 58-3-5 before the turn of the century against the best lightweights around? Not to mention welterweights. Gans never weighed more than 137 pounds or so, yet regularly brought down 147-pounders. He battled the famous welterweight champ Joe Walcott to a draw in 1904, and the year before dropped a decision to the legendary Sam Langford, who on most days could be found whipping the tar out of heavyweights.

Gans was decades ahead of his time. He wasn't a killer puncher—though certainly one who hit hard enough to get the respect of his opponents—but he fought with skill and grace and timing and intelligence, and there were few at the time who did it as well as he did. Maybe if Jack Johnson was a lightweight, and a bit more of a mover, he would have been Gans. That's how good he was.

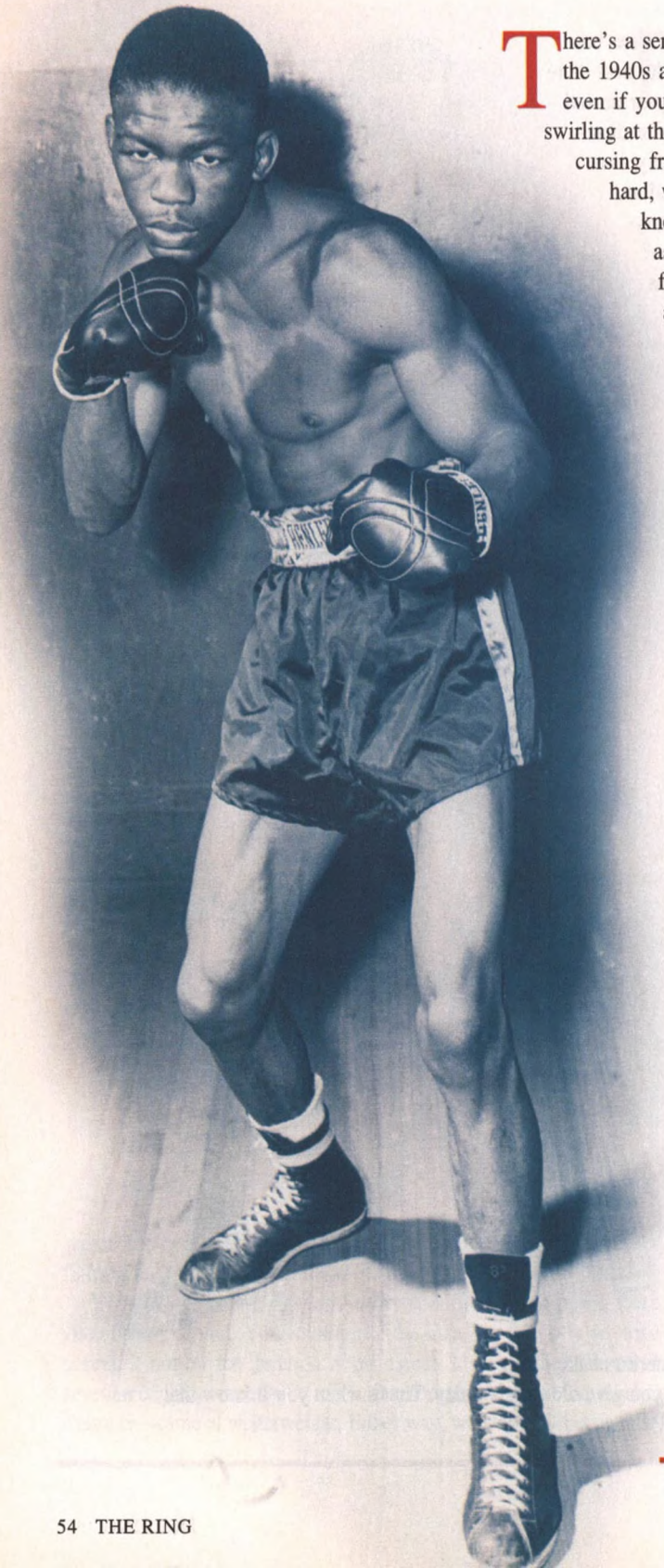
Don't penalize Gans for throwing a couple of fights—particularly the one against the powerful but crude Terry McGovern, who stopped him, allegedly, in two one-sided rounds. On the best day of his life, McGovern couldn't hit Gans in the ass with a handful of salt, but it was 1900, and McGovern was popular and white, Gans was less popular and black, and sometimes a guy has to make a choice. Gans made his choice and then he made up for it, stopping Frank Erne in one round to win the title, then notching eight successful defenses before relinquishing the title to challenge Walcott. After the Walcott fight, he regained the title and defended it five more times before twice getting stopped by Battling Nelson. By that time Gans probably already was dying of tuberculosis, which killed him two years later.

Someday you'll be old, if you're lucky, and some snot-nose will be yakking about how great some super light cruiserweight interim champion is. You'll know better and you'll tell him, and he'll give you the look you give old-timers today. That's when you'll know that sometimes the old-timers are right. And they were right about Gans.

5 IKE WILLIAMS

125-24-5 (60)

World Champion 1947-'51



There's a sense one gets when thinking about the fight game as it existed in the 1940s and early-'50s. If you weren't there to experience it, and maybe even if you were, the period evokes images of black and white and fights swirling at the center of a smoke-filled club; of guys in striped suits and hats cursing from ringside; of resin boxes in the corners. It evokes images of hard, well-schooled, proud fighters who fought because it was all they knew and they did it as hard as they could as often as they could for as long as they could. They didn't worry about image or pound-for-pound or commercial endorsements or lawyers. They worried about getting a fight in the Garden and looking good so they could get back to the Garden. And brother, they could fight. Williams epitomizes the era.

There were lots of good fighters in the '40s and early-'50s, and tons of good lightweights: Bob Montgomery, Beau Jack, Sammy Angott, Wesley Mouzon, Willie Joyce, Jesse Flores, Jimmy Carter. Williams was the best of the lot, even if Carter beat him for the title toward the end, and even if we don't know even now and might never know to what extent the infamous Blinky Palermo and his crew influenced Williams' career. We do know that the Managers Guild blackballed Williams after he showed manager Connie McCarthy the highway, and we know that until he hooked up with good old Blinky and company, Williams couldn't get any significant fights.

We know too that once he got going again, Williams starched Montgomery to avenge a 12-round knockout loss suffered three years earlier, and won the vacant world title in the process. We know he fought a lot of over-the-weight non-title matches over the next several years and won most of them, but got in five successful title defenses, too. He beat Jack three times and drew with him once. The Carter fight? It was the 137th bout of his career, and Williams broke his ass losing 21 pounds to get down to 135. Carter was a decent pug and a nice enough guy, but everyone knew he wasn't the fighter a prime Williams was.

Williams didn't fight again as a lightweight after losing the title. Losses to Don Williams, Gil Turner, Chuck Davey, Carmen Basilio, and others followed. He walked away after beating Jack once more, this time by ninth-round stoppage. It was '56 and he'd had 154 fights over 16 years. It was time.

No one ever had to look for Williams in the ring. His chief rivals, Jack and Montgomery, who shared in a profitable and see-saw series themselves, would attest to that. Montgomery especially, whom Williams suspected of deliberately prolonging the beating he took in their first bout. He laid Montgomery out in the rematch and told the press he didn't get him as good as he wanted to, that he wanted to murder him. Tough guys in a tough business. None at lightweight were tougher than Ike Williams.

6 JOE BROWN

104-44-13 (47) with 1 no-contest

World Champion 1956-'62

Brown is one of those guys who for whatever reason isn't remembered by a lot of people. Maybe it's the name, "Joe Brown." It's a common name. Very nondescript. Even his nickname—"Old Bones"—while colorful, isn't especially flattering for a fighter, or marketable. The thing is it fit him perfectly, which is really all a nickname is supposed to do anyway, right? Actually, the fighter himself chose the sobriquet, as the story goes, as a tribute to his longevity. He turned pro in 1943, had one fight, and didn't fight again until '46. A full 10 years passed after that before he got a title shot and beat Wallace "Bud" Smith. He was 30 already, old for a lightweight, especially in the '50s. He ended up fighting until he was 44. That's why he was Old Bones.

There are lots of lightweights throughout history who hit harder than Brown did. He liked his sneaky, stinging right hand, but he was no killer. A lot of guys were faster too, and more skilled mechanically. There weren't a lot of things Brown did wonderfully. But he knew how to keep his chin tucked, he was clever as all hell, he could go all night, and he was just quick enough and just good enough at hiding inside the ropes that guys just couldn't beat him. (Especially if they came to him, and most of them did.) A lot of the best lightweights of the time tried: Smith, whom Brown beat three times, Virgil Akins, Kenny Lane, Ralph Dupas, Dave Charnley, Arthur Persley. A few of them—Lane, Dupas, and Charnley—were favored to beat him when they challenged him for the title. That's how underappreciated he was. But each of them became one of the 11 successful title defenses he made over his six-year reign.

You'd think a guy with Roberto Duran-like title numbers would be higher than number six on the all-time list. But this is a good place for Brown because he was a much better fighter when he was a champion than he was either before or after. Between '46 and '48, Brown lost eight times—twice by knockout (one of those to featherweight great Sandy Saddler). He went undefeated in '49, lost once in '50, and lost twice more in '51. George Araujo stopped him in '52, and he dropped three more decisions before beating Wallace for the title in '56.

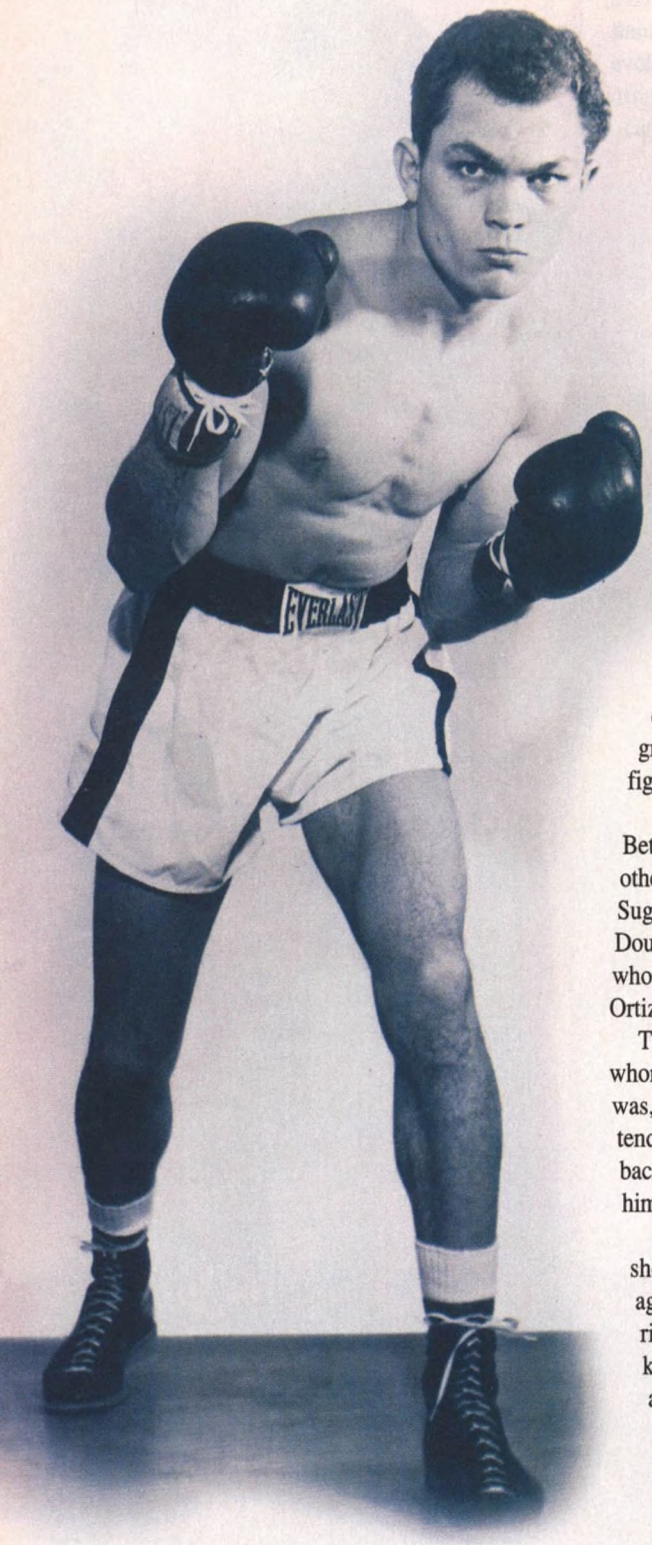
Remarkably, as champion Brown then went 23-3-2 (12) over the next six years, dropping non-title 10-rounders to Johnny Busso and Giordano Campari and inexplicably getting stopped in six by Ray Portilla. But he took on challenger after challenger. If there was a buck to be made, Old Bones was there, slashing and stabbing and finding a way to win. After Carlos Ortiz beat him for the title in '62, just like that he was again mediocre, though at least now he could blame it on age. He had 46 more fights after that and lost 24 of them.

Maybe it's true what they say about a title making a guy a better fighter by 70 percent. It worked for Brown. It worked well enough to make him one of the best lightweights ever. Not one of the best remembered, but one of the best.

7 CARLOS ORTIZ

61-7-1 (30) with 1 no-contest

World Champion 1962-'65, '65-'68



We can hear it now: Ortiz whipped Joe "Old Bones" Brown outright, boxed him stupid, and took the title from him by the ridiculously one-sided scores of 74-60, 74-66, and 74-58. Yet we rated Brown over Ortiz. Why? Simple: Brown got more done at the weight and as a champion. Ortiz was a magnificent fighter, a fluid, gifted boxer-puncher who on his best night might have stayed with any 135-pound fighter in history. But he did a lot of his early work at junior welterweight, he wasn't as consistent a champion as was Brown, and he logged, between his two reigns, three fewer title defenses. We won't even count the two title fight losses to Duilio Loi, since technically they occurred at junior welter and because to this day many consider both decision losses to be controversial.

There. That's done. That's why Ortiz is rated beneath Brown. Now, here's why Ortiz is one of the best lightweights ever: It's true that Brown was past his prime when he and Ortiz met for the title. But a slightly used-up Brown was still good enough to whip most of the lightweights out there if they fought his fight. Ortiz, who liked to come forward, instead patiently boxed and jabbed, and a completely befuddled Brown couldn't do a thing with him. The fight was a terrible stinker as a result, but Ortiz was the new champ. It was one of the best conceived and most intelligently applied fight plans of the day. Put it up there with the "Rope-a-Dope" in the pantheon of all-time great strategies, and give Ortiz credit for being an exceptionally intelligent fighter.

Give credit to Ortiz too for facing every credible challenger available. Between his two reigns, Ortiz made nine successful defenses, beating among others fellow Hall of Famer Flash Elorde (twice), former featherweight champ Sugar Ramos (twice), one-time junior welterweight nemesis Kenny Lane, and Doug Vaillant. Also remember that the awkward and skilled Ismael Laguna, who appears later on these pages, lost two of three to Ortiz. (Laguna outpointed Ortiz for the title in 1965, but lost the two returns.)

The loss to journeyman Carlos Teo Cruz in '68 for the title? Depends on whom you ask. Some say Ortiz was robbed. Others insist it didn't matter if he was, that Ortiz was running out of steam anyway. Either way, he never contended for the title again. He took some time off after the Cruz fight, came back and beat some no-hopers, then quit for good after Ken Buchanan mauled him in '72.

Give Ortiz credit for fighting the good fight against boxing's ridiculous shenanigans, like when the WBC ordered him to continue the first fight against Ramos after referee Billy Conn already had stopped it and the crowd rioted. And give him credit too for telling the WBA to shove it when they kept hounding him to fight Lane a third time when everyone knew it wasn't a contest anymore. (He did eventually relent and beat Lane by a wide margin, but not before making the WBA beg for it.) Give the guy credit for being a hell of a lightweight. Not a better one than Brown if you split hairs, but a hell of a lightweight just the same.

8 TONY CANZONERI

137-24-10 (44) with 4 no-decisions

World Champion 1930-'33, '35-36

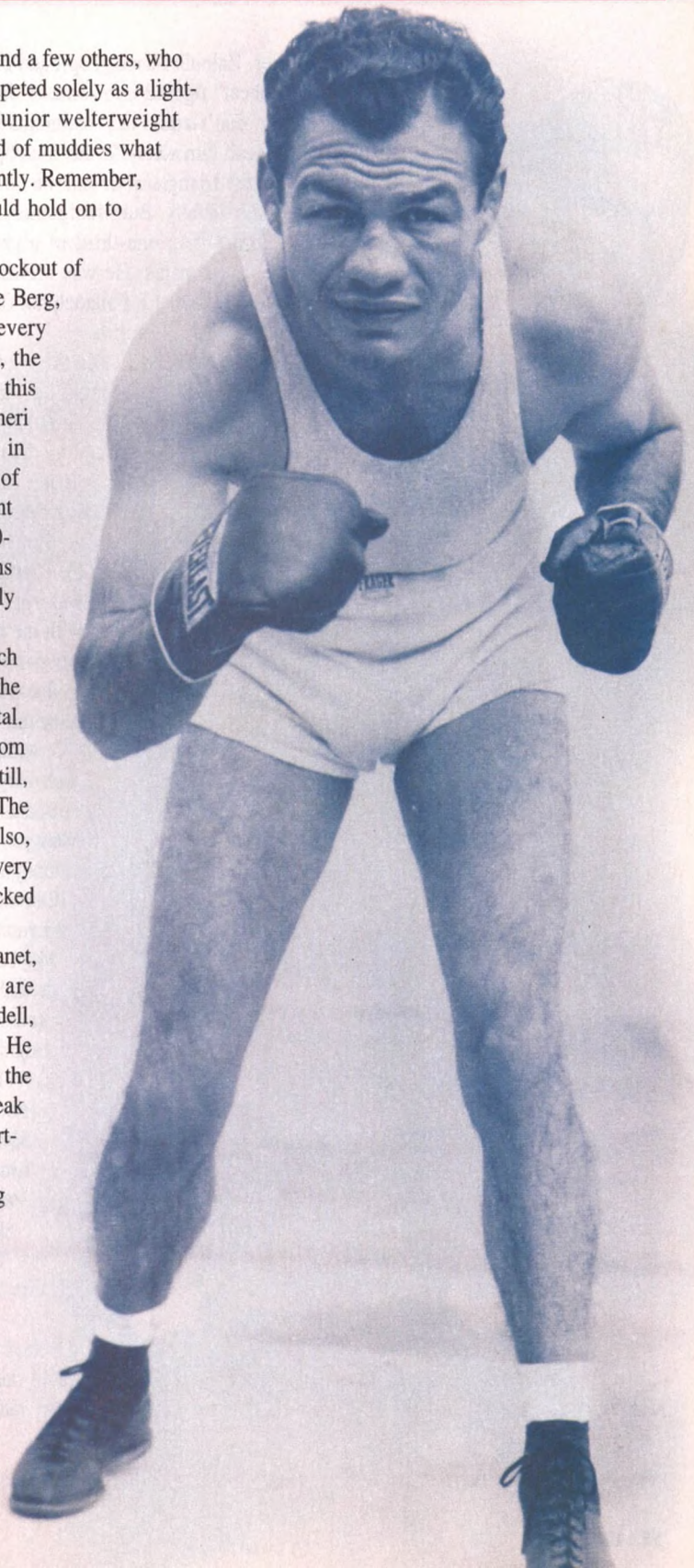
Canzoneri is a good example of a guy, like Whitaker and a few others, who would have rated even higher on this list had he competed solely as a lightweight. He didn't. He was a featherweight and junior welterweight champion as well, and the business he got done at 140 kind of muddies what he accomplished at 135 since much of it was done concurrently. Remember, in those days—this was pre-Henry Armstrong—a guy could hold on to titles in as many weight classes as he could handle.

Canzoneri won the lightweight title with a 66-second knockout of Al Singer in 1930. His first defense was a win over Jackie Berg, which also netted him the junior welterweight title. So every defense that followed was either for the lightweight title, the junior welterweight title, or both. Confusing, huh? (Maybe this is why they don't allow it anymore.) For example: Canzoneri decisioned Cecil Payne in defense of the 140-pound title in July '31. That September he beat Berg again in defense of both titles, then Phillie Griffin for just the junior welterweight belt, then Kid Chocolate for both titles. He lost the 140-pound title to Jackie Jadick, dropped a return a few months later, then retained the lightweight title with a win over Billy Petrolle. Good work if you can get it.

So with all this dual title nonsense going on, how much work did Canzoneri get done with the lightweight belt on the line? Two reigns as the champion and five title defenses. Total. But that's why the junior welterweight business detracts from what he accomplished at 135. It's hard to separate the two. Still, look at the record again. A mere 24 losses in 175 fights. The sheer volume of Canzoneri's work gets him in the top 10. Also, the guy was stopped once in a 14-year career, that in his very last fight when left hook specialist Al "Bummy" Davis knocked him out in three in '39. One kayo loss in 175 fights.

Canzoneri fought every 130-140 pound fighter on the planet, many more than once and many whose names today are enshrined in Canastota: Johnny Dundee, Berg, Sammy Mandell, Chocolate, Barney Ross, Lou Ambers, Jimmy McLarnin. He was among the four or five best fighters in the world from the late-'20s through the mid-'30s even if he couldn't get a break against Ross and even if Ambers, his one-time sparring partner, beat him two out of three.

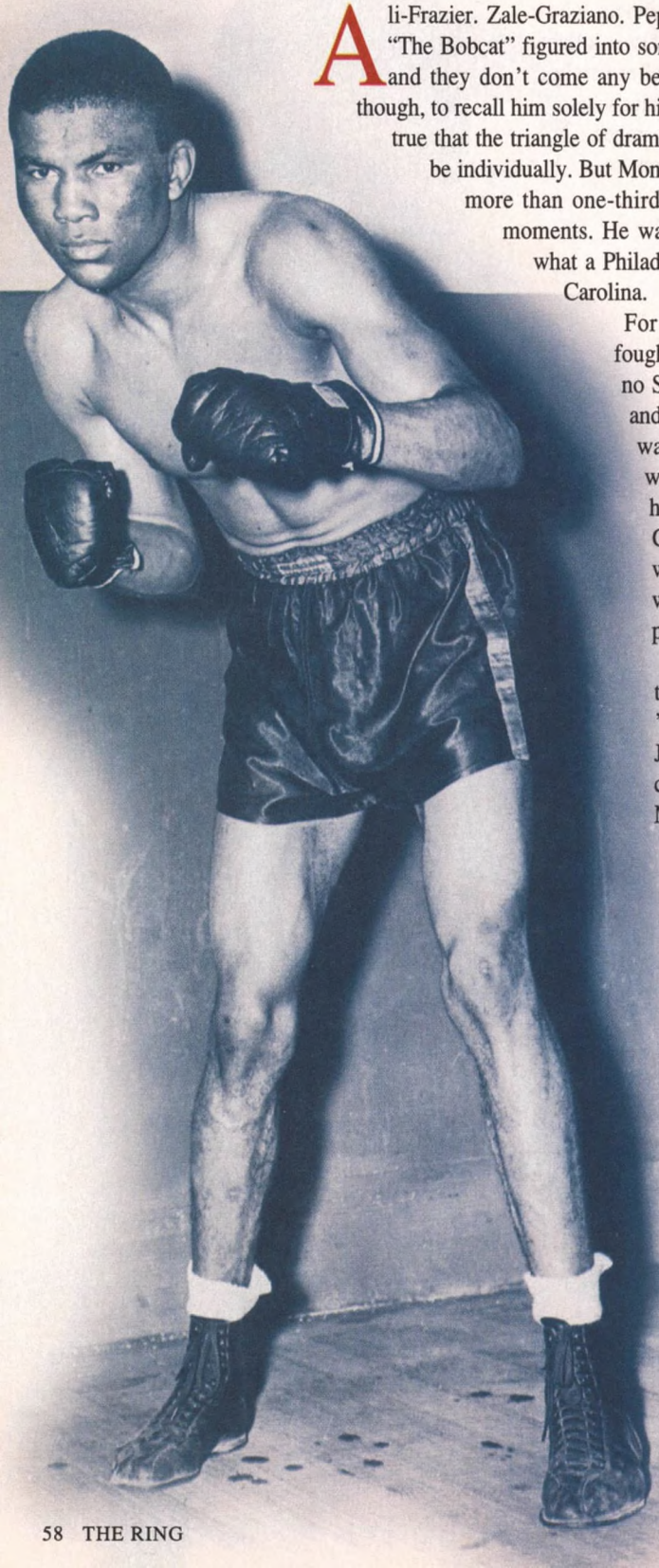
Canzoneri was the kind of guy fight guys are talking about when they call someone a throwback. He fought all the time, he fought everyone around, and he could do it all—outbox faster, slicker guys and outpunch bigger, stronger guys. He outfought, outhustled, and beat up Ross in their first match in '33—despite what the judges saw. And he obliterated poor Berg with a single right hand in their '31 showdown. He did it all, and that's why he's here.



9 BOB MONTGOMERY

75-19-3 (37)

New York World Champion 1943, '44-'47



Ali-Frazier. Zale-Graziano. Pep-Saddler. Montgomery-Beau Jack. Montgomery-Ike Williams, too. "The Bobcat" figured into some of the best and most intense lightweight title fights of the 1940s, and they don't come any better than they did then. It would be a disservice to Montgomery, though, to recall him solely for his four-fight series with Jack and his two-fight war with Williams. It's true that the triangle of drama the three of them created was bigger than each of them ever could be individually. But Montgomery, like Jack and like Williams, was more than those six fights, more than one-third of a great act even if those six fights represented his very best moments. He was a Philadelphia fighter all the way through, before anyone knew what a Philadelphia fighter was and even though, technically, he was from South Carolina.

For the first three years of his pro career—32 fights—Montgomery fought only in Philadelphia and Atlantic City. That was it. No Bayonne, no Scranton, no New York, no Cleveland. It helped him learn the game, and by the time he got to New York and Baltimore and Washington, he was just about ready for Jack and Williams. He couldn't do anything with Sammy "The Clutch" Angott, who beat him three out of three, but he beat other good, competent fighters, such as Bobby Ruffin, Lulu Constantino, Petey Scalzo, and the incomparable Fritzie Zivic. He was aggressive and tough-minded, and you couldn't discourage him with the business end of a tire iron. What he lacked in pure punching power he made up for with tenacity and stamina.

Jack found out how tough Montgomery was when "The Bobcat" took the New York title from him over 15 rounds at the Garden in '43. Montgomery gave it back to him six months later, but barely. Jack fought the fight of his life and still had to hang on with all he could muster in the 14th and 15th rounds, which was when Montgomery usually was at his best. It was just two fights later that Montgomery issued Williams a savage beating, stopping him in the 12th and convincing Williams forever more that Montgomery had it in for him, that he prolonged the beating just for the fun of it. Maybe it was true, maybe it wasn't, but Montgomery was back at it with Jack before long, regaining the title, losing a non-title 10-rounder to his old nemesis, making a couple of defenses, then signing for the return with Williams.

It was one of the best lightweight slugfests ever, and at the end, Williams was the world champ and Montgomery was done. He lost the last six fights of his career—the very last one in Philadelphia, fittingly. Still, his mark had been made. In an extremely rich lightweight era, he was stopped just three times in 97 fights: by Williams, by the murderous-hitting Al "Bummy" Davis in '44, and by the excellent Wesley Mouzon in '46. (He stopped Mouzon in the return three months later.) So what that Montgomery managed just two successful title defenses. Without him, Jack and Williams could not have soared to the heights they did, nor would we remember them as well or as fondly as we do. Montgomery made them better fighters.

10 BEAU JACK

83-24-5 (40) with 1 no-decision

New York World Champion 1942-'43, '43-'44

Most observers would agree that of the three great lightweights of the 1940s—Ike Williams, Bob Montgomery, and Jack—Jack was at the bottom. Clearly Williams was his superior—he beat him three times: by kayo in 1948 and again '55 in Jack's last fight, and over the distance in '51. They also drew early in '55. Of course, Jack and Montgomery split evenly their four-fight series, but Jack managed a win and a draw against Sammy Angott, whom Montgomery couldn't lick in three tries. Also, Jack decisioned the same Al "Bummy" Davis who starched Montgomery in a single round. Still, Montgomery's win over Williams, even though he was destroyed in the rematch, is big. He has to get the edge.

That's how and why Jack rates where he does as compared to Williams and Montgomery. That's how they rate historically. Who was the most popular? Who made the most money? Which of the three had the most fans? Jack did. Hands down. And remember—this is called prize fighting. That has to count for something.

Jack was enormously popular, a crowd-pleasing pressure guy who fought more main events at Madison Square Garden than did any other fighter. More than Joe Louis, more than Sugar Ray Robinson, more than Willie Pep. Dozens more than did either Williams or Montgomery. They loved him in New York. Couldn't get enough of him. It's why by the time he was done, Jack had grossed $1.5-million, an unspeakable amount of money for a lightweight to make in the 1940s, even if it took him all of his 15-year career to do it. Compare that to poor Williams, who after his career was over told a senate committee investigating organized crime in boxing that there were times when he never saw a dime of his purses.

Jack earned every penny of that million-and-a-half, and not just because he was duking it out with Montgomery every time anyone turned around. He fought everybody: Freddie Archer, Tippy Larkin, Fritzie Zivic, a faded Henry Armstrong, Willie Joyce, Tony Janiro, Lew Jenkins. He didn't beat them all, but he beat a lot of them, and even when he lost, everyone knew it was going to be a fight. When Jack fought, you could be guaranteed he'd be there all night throwing punches and taking punches. That's what he did. Remember too: The highest grossing fight ever was Jack's fourth against Montgomery. Through the sale of war bonds at The Garden—where else?—the gate swelled to nearly $36-million.

It's well-known by now that before he became a fighter Jack was a shoeshine guy at a hotel. And that he blew that $1.5-mil and ended up back at that same Miami hotel after his body wore out from all those great fights he gave us. It doesn't mean it ended badly for him. It means when he was at the top he lived all-out. We would have expected nothing less from him.

11 LOU AMBERS

90-8-6 (30)

World Champion 1936-'38, '39-'40

Most guys, when you mention Ambers, recall him as the guy Henry Armstrong won the lightweight title from in 1937, right after "Hammerin' Hank" beat Barney Ross for the welterweight crown. That's right. Ambers is that guy. He's also the guy who beat Armstrong in the return to regain the title a year later.

Okay, so referee Arthur Donovan penalized Armstrong a ridiculous five times for low blows in that bout and still it was close in rounds: 8-7 (twice) and 11-3-1. All right, so Armstrong was a much better fighter and would have won handily had it not been for the penalties. He was much better than most everybody. That doesn't detract at all from what Ambers was able to get done at lightweight over a relatively short—nine years—career that saw him face the very best lightweights around.

Ambers wasn't the most talented lightweight of his era. Tony Canzoneri was, and Ambers whipped him two out of three—even if Canzoneri was a day or two on the downside by that time. That shows you the kind of guy Ambers was. He was Canzoneri's sparring partner earlier in his career and dropped a decision to his old employer for the vacant title in 1935. He was floored three times. But he got him again in '36 and '37, and when the fights were done there was no controversy, as there was when Canzoneri lost to Barney Ross. When Ambers beat you, he beat you good, with pressure and lots of leather, and if you couldn't keep up, well, that was your problem.

Don't get the impression that Canzoneri and Armstrong were the only good fighters Ambers—whose real name was Luigi D'Ambrosio—beat. He beat Fritzie Zivic too, and Sammy Fuller. Ambers whipped Baby Arizmendi three times, as well as Al "Bummy" Davis, Tony Scarpati, Pedro Montanez, and Honey Mellody. And he was a draw. His title defense against Montanez, who was unbeaten in 61 fights, earned Ambers the highest purse ever paid to a lightweight at that time: $82,500. Of course, much of that was due to the shrewdness of his manager, Al Weill, who later on would guide to a world title another young Italian fighter of some note.

Ambers was more than just the guy Armstrong beat, even though he collapsed twice against the hard-hitting but immensely flawed Lew Jenkins. Jenkins floored him five times on the way to destroying him in the fifth to take the title. Ambers made it to the seventh in the rematch, then never fought again. He got out after less than a decade in the ring, which was unusual for the era and unusual for the lightweights who appear on this list. He made just two successful defenses of the title, but the quality of his opposition makes up for the lack of great title fight tenure. Yes, he's the guy Armstrong beat for the lightweight title. He was more than that, too.

12 FREDDIE WELSH

76-4-6 (32) with 82 no-decisions

World Champion 1914-'17

You have to pity guys who lose to legends. It doesn't matter what they accomplished in their lives or careers, they're only remembered for the fight they lost to the legend. It doesn't matter how good they were or how many defenses they made or how many knockouts they scored. It's like it all gets erased because the guy they lost to has a bigger legacy and they were just part of his. Of course they're not as good as the legend in most cases. If they were, they wouldn't have lost to him. But everything they did is lost. It's that way with Lou Ambers, and it's that way with Ken Buchanan, and it's that way with Welsh, too, who lost the title in 1917 to Benny Leonard.

People forget that Welsh was a fine lightweight champion himself who, for the record, beat Leonard via 10-round newspaper decision in July '16 (he also unofficially dropped a 10-rounder to him the prior March). They forget that he beat (by newspaper decision in some cases) all of the prized lightweights of the day, including Johnny Dundee, Joe Rivers, Willie Ritchie—from whom he claimed the title in '14—Ad Wolgast, and Battling Nelson. He was no brawler, either. Welsh was a stylish boxer-mover and one of the better fighters of the century's second decade, regardless of weight. He was the antithesis of the brutish and foul-prone Wolgast, who, true to form, fouled out against him in the 11th round in their Fourth of July 1916 meeting for the title. He wouldn't stop hitting Welsh low. Welsh also stopped Wolgast in eight rounds in '14.

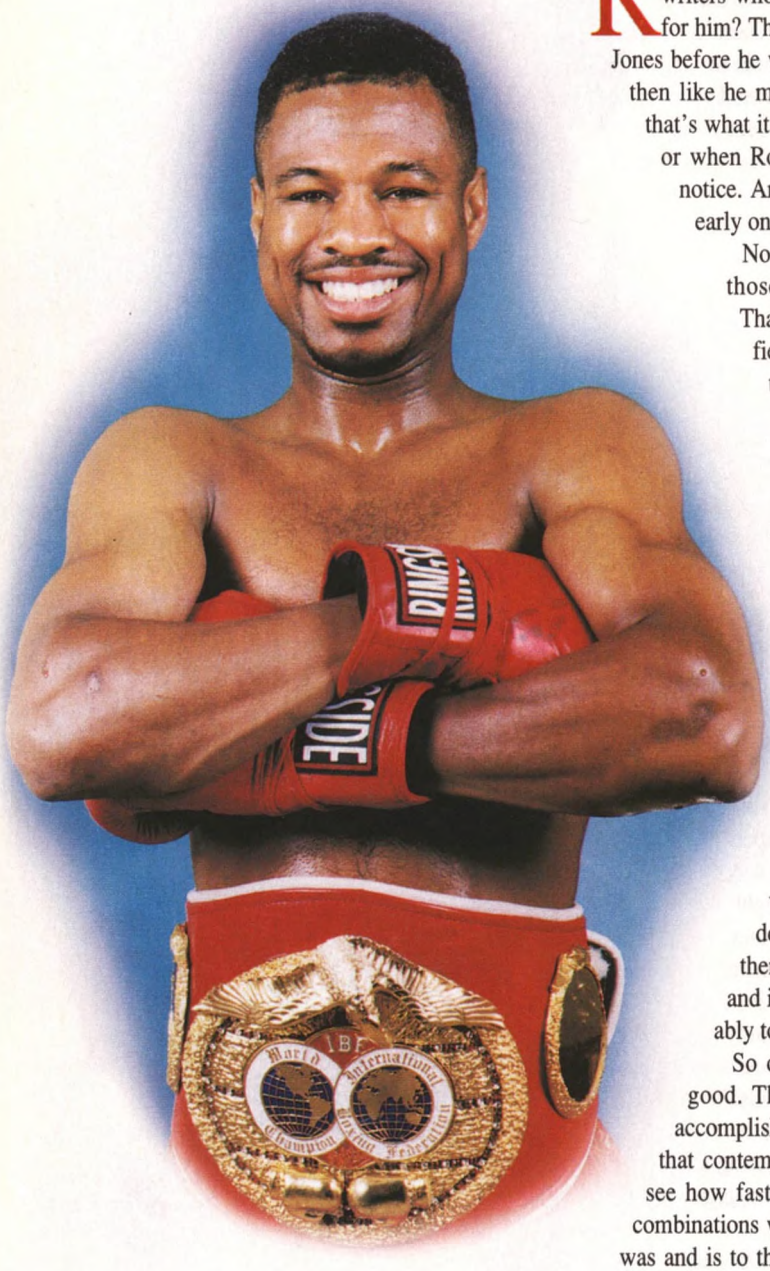
Don't penalize Welsh for making just two successful title defenses (over Wolgast and Charley White). It wasn't as important during that era for the title to be defended officially, the way it is now. (Indeed, Leonard made just six defenses in an eight-year reign.) During his two-year reign, Welsh fought 49 times, going 9-1 (4) with 39 no-decisions against the very best lightweights on the planet. Of the few newspaper decisions he lost, three of them—to Rocky Kansas, Chick Simler, and Johnny Kilbane—came in succession, right before his ninth-round knockout loss to Leonard for the title. Makes you wonder what Welsh's manager was thinking when he bet Welsh's entire $4,000 purse on him to whip Leonard, a move that resulted in Welsh's not seeing a penny for his efforts. The defeat to Leonard was the only stoppage loss of Welsh's 168-bout, 17-year career.

A lot of guys will tell you the loss to Leonard was Welsh's last fight. Not true. He retired for three years, came back, won four fights in a row, then drew with Clonie Tate, lost to Archie Walker, and retired for good in '22. He probably thought at the time that he'd done a good job overall, that he'd left his mark and the loss to Leonard would be forgiven. It wouldn't overshadow his whole career. It was just one loss after all, and how did he know Leonard would become a legend?

13 SHANE MOSLEY

37-0 (34)

IBF Champion 1997-'99



Remember when Mosley was coming up and all the West Coast fight writers who knew what they were talking about kept saying to watch for him? There was a buzz about him like the one that was around Roy Jones before he won his first title. People talked about "Sugar Shane" even then like he might be an all-time great. It appears they were right, and that's what it must have been like when Benny Leonard was coming up, or when Roberto Duran or Ike Williams first began to make people notice. Around really special fighters, there's always that buzz from early on. Mosley had it. He still does.

No one is saying Mosley's lightweight credentials are equal to those Duran accumulated, or Leonard or Pernell Whitaker. That's why he's down here instead of up there. He never unified the lightweight title against Stevie Johnston—which certainly would have improved his ranking—or even appeared particularly hungry to, which was seen as fairly odd since he would have been a heavy favorite to win such a match. Additionally, Mosley's cast of title challengers was competent but not overly impressive: Manuel Gomez, Demetrio Ceballos, Wilfrido Ruiz, Eduardo Morales, Golden Johnson, and John Brown. Jesse James Leija and John-John Molina are still exceptionally solid pros, but were not prime lightweights when they faced Mosley.

Mosley's title reign lasted just under two years, but he crammed in eight defenses—a busy championship schedule by today's standards—and, like Whitaker, he didn't lose many rounds along the way. Molina made things a little uncomfortable for him for a while, until Mosley's bodyshots broke the veteran down, and Gomez was harder than expected. But for the most part, Mosley dominated opponents. He didn't just outpoint them, he beat them up. He stopped every title challenger inside the distance, and if you want more than that from any champion, you're probably too hard to please.

So overall, Mosley's lightweight legacy isn't legendary. It's good. The reason he's here anyway has to do not with what he accomplished, but how he looked accomplishing it. It's in this respect that contemporary fighters have an edge over the old-timers. We can see how fast Mosley was at lightweight, how fluid and powerful his combinations were, how complete his skills were, and how committed he was and is to the simple idea of winning the prize fight every single time out. Maybe other guys who are rated beneath him showed the same fire and skills, or even guys that didn't make the list at all. But we don't know because we can't see them. We can see Mosley and we saw what a terrific lightweight fighter he was.

Probably, Mosley will be remembered long after he is gone for what he did at welterweight. He looks even scarier at 147 than he did at 135. But isn't it fun to wonder, credentials or not, how he'd have done against the lightweight Duran? Or Leonard? Or Whitaker? In terms of ability, he probably belongs with those guys. He just didn't stay at 135 long enough to get rated with them.

14 HENRY ARMSTRONG

150-21-9 (100)

World Champion 1938-'39

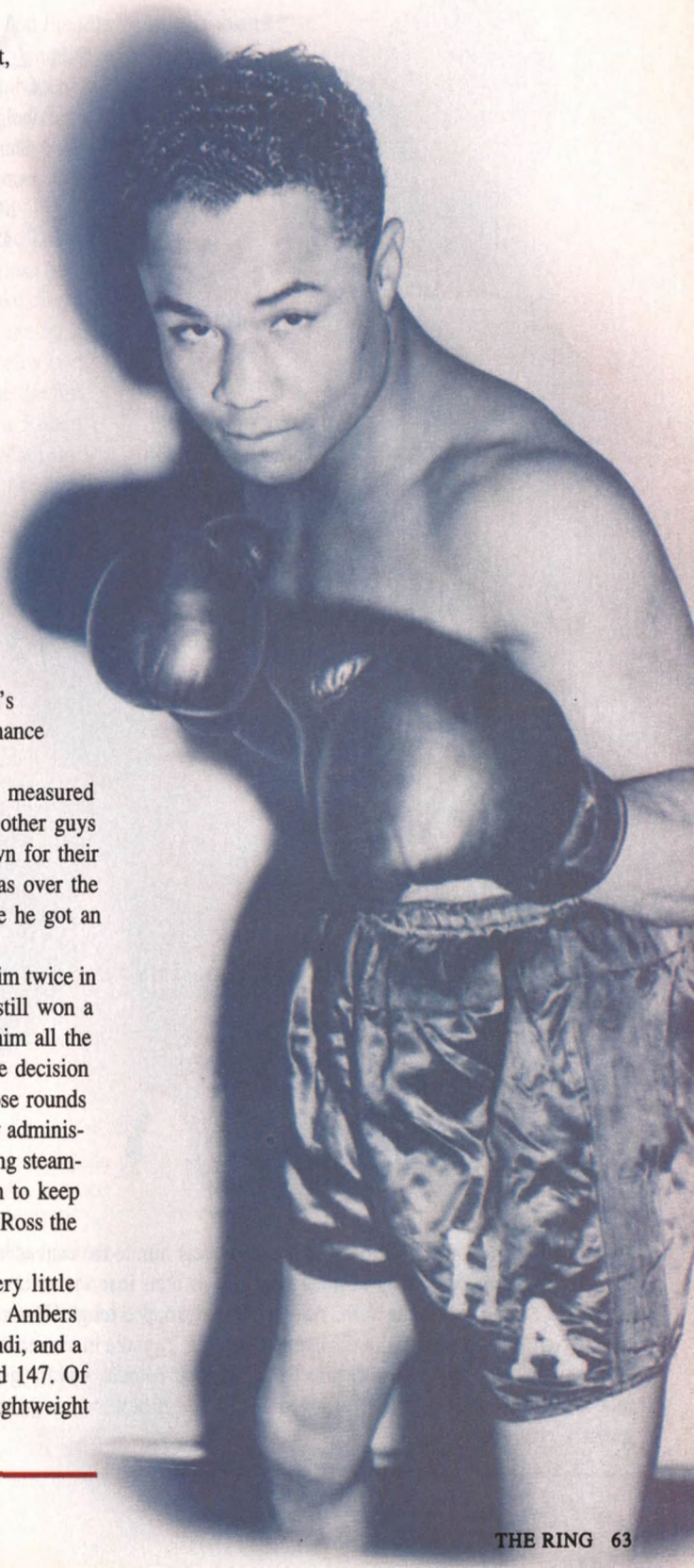
We all remember Armstrong for his remarkable feat of simultaneously holding the lightweight, welterweight, and featherweight titles. Also, he's quite probably the second best welterweight ever, right behind Sugar Ray Robinson. Few recall that he never defended the featherweight crown won from little Petey Sarron; he relinquished it right after beating Lou Ambers for the lightweight title, which he won right after whipping Barney Ross for the 147-pound belt. So accept his greatness as a welterweight, which is undisputed from most corners, as it should be. And accept his greatness for capturing three belts at three different weights and also for coming within a hair of winning the middleweight title from Ceferino Garcia. But was he an all-time great lightweight? It depends on your criteria.

Clearly, 135 was just a stopover for Armstrong, an interim weight between feather and welter, where, if he got down low enough, he could snatch another world title and make a few more bucks. Welterweight was where he felt most comfortable, and that's why he made a division-record 19 title defenses at that weight. Plus, the lightweight champion was Ambers, at the time considered a very solid but unspectacular fighter who fought head-first, just like Armstrong did. Everyone knew head-first was Armstrong's fight and not the way to fight him if you were going to have a chance against him.

So Armstrong's career as a lightweight primarily must be measured based on how he did against Ambers and how he did against other guys who sometimes fought at lightweight but maybe are best known for their accomplishments elsewhere—namely Ross, who admittedly was over the hill and who hadn't fought at 135 in about five years, or since he got an undeserved decision over Tony Canzoneri in '33.

First the Ambers fights: Armstong beat him up and floored him twice in a savage affair the first time, lost three rounds on fouls, and still won a split decision. The second time around, Armstrong outfought him all the way in most observers' eyes, but lost five rounds on fouls. The decision was close, but in Ambers' favor. If Armstrong doesn't lose those rounds for punching low—and whether the penalties were appropriately administered is still open to question—he wins outright. Ross? Armstrong steamrolled him. Ross was an old 29 and just wasn't strong enough to keep him on the outside. Armstrong wrote years later that he carried Ross the last three rounds. No one doubted it.

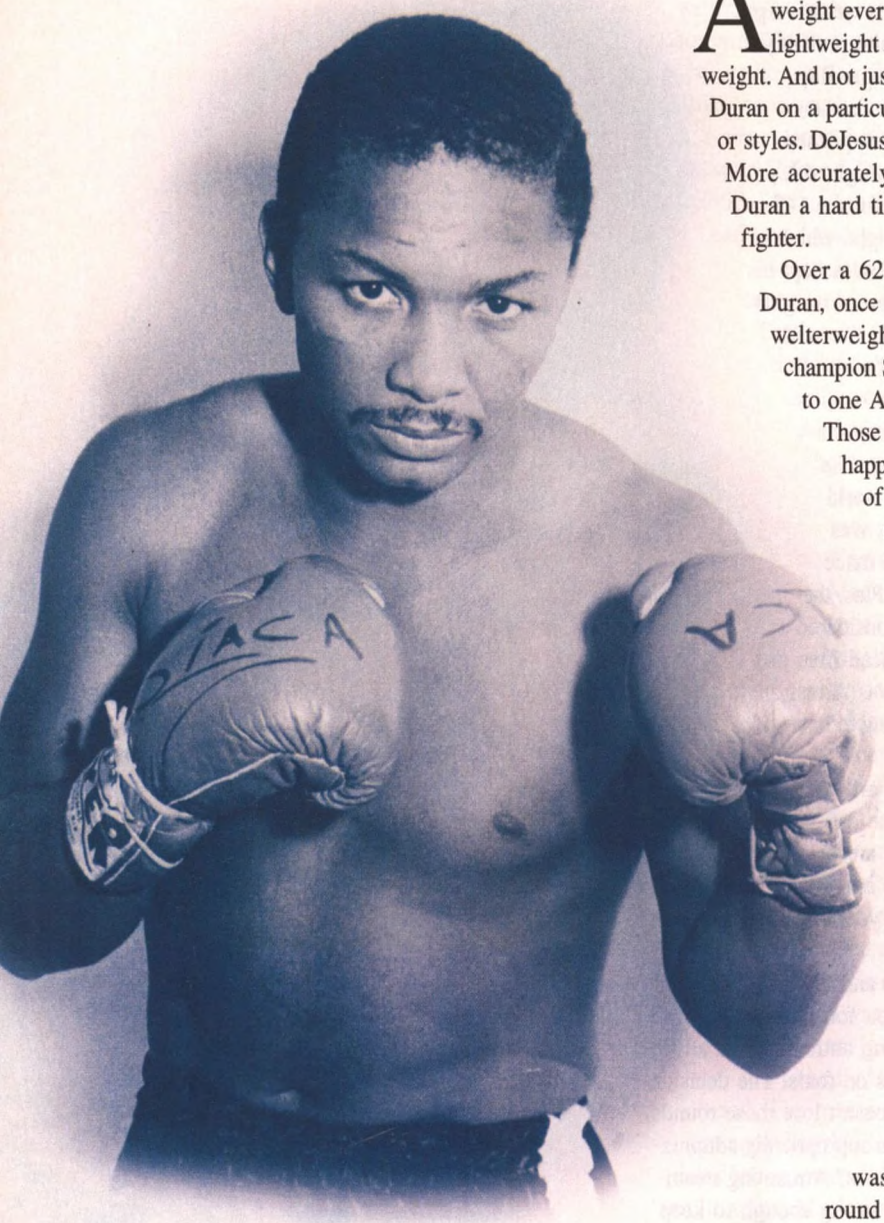
The conclusion? Armstrong spent very little time and very little attention at 135. It wasn't where he wanted to be. But he beat Ambers and he beat Ross. He also beat Pedro Montanez, Baby Arizmendi, and a few other good fighters who hopped around between 135 and 147. Of course he was a better welterweight. But would you pick any lightweight in history to beat him?



15 ESTEBAN DeJESUS

57-5 (32)

WBC Champion 1976-'78



Already we established that Roberto Duran was the best lightweight ever. It would stand to reason, then, that only a great lightweight could have beaten him. DeJesus was a great lightweight. And not just because he was the only 135-pound guy to whip Duran on a particular night; this was not a matter of awkwardness, or styles. DeJesus was not Ken Norton to Duran's Muhammad Ali. More accurately, he was Joe Frazier to Duran's Ali. He gave Duran a hard time every time because he was a hell of a good fighter.

Over a 62-bout career, DeJesus lost five times: twice to Duran, once to the legendary and Hall of Fame-bound junior welterweight Antonio Cervantes, once to WBC 140-pound champion Saoul Mamby in DeJesus' very last fight, and once to one Antonio Gomez in a meaningless 1971 10-rounder. Those are the numbers of a great fighter, and they didn't happen by accident. During Duran's long, long reign of terror, DeJesus generally was recognized as the second best lightweight on the planet.

DeJesus was 32-1 (19) when he got the call to meet Duran, who already was the champion, in a non-title 10-rounder at Madison Square Garden. It was supposed to be easy for Duran, but DeJesus had been around. San Juan was full of good, tough lightweights, and DeJesus had met and beaten just about all of them during the first three years of his career. Still, it was a surprise when his left hook dropped Duran on his rump in the first 30 seconds of the fight. It was a surprise when he backed Duran up and outfought him, and it was a surprise when DeJesus didn't let up all night. The only thing that wasn't a surprise was when he got the decision, which, for the record, wasn't even particularly close: 6-3-1, 6-2-2, and 5-4-1 in rounds.

The rematches were competitive, but Duran was, well, Duran. DeJesus floored him in the first round again in the second meeting, but was worn down and stopped in the 11th. In the rubber match, DeJesus was stubborn, but Duran broke him to the body and beat him to the canvas in the 12th.

So what did DeJesus do besides beat Duran then lose the returns? Twice he beat tough contender Ray Lampkin. He stopped Ishimatsu Suzuki to win the WBC title in '76 and stopped tough Hector Medina in seven in his first defense. He drew an adoring 17,000 fans in San Juan to watch him dismantle Buzzsaw Yamabe in six, and scored an 11th-round stoppage of Vicente Saldivar. He was big. Almost as big in Puerto Rico then as Felix Trinidad is today and for good reason: He was a great fighter who would have been greater, indeed, who would likely have enjoyed a long and prosperous reign himself, had he not the misfortune of campaigning alongside the greatest ever.

16 KEN BUCHANAN

61-8 (27)

World Champion 1970-'72

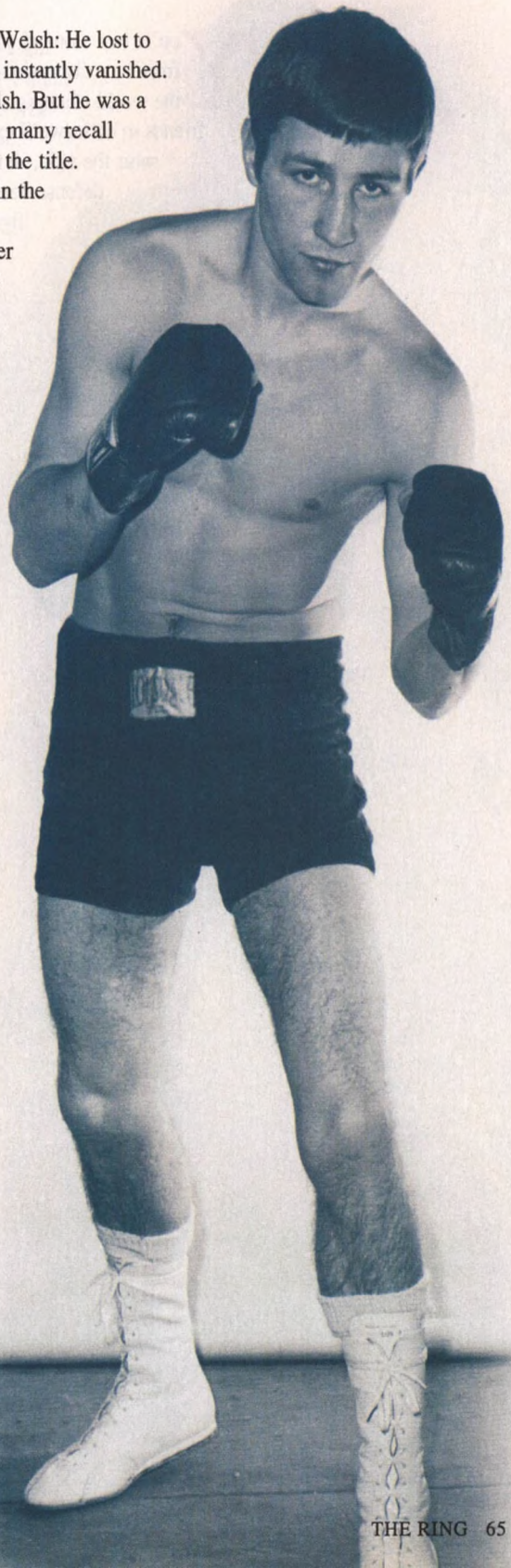
Pity Buchanan for the same reasons you would Lou Ambers and Freddie Welsh: He lost to a legend in the biggest fight of his career, and all that he accomplished instantly vanished. Granted, Buchanan didn't accomplish as much as either Ambers or Welsh. But he was a good, plucky lightweight who deserves better than to be recalled the way many recall him—as that pale guy in the plaid shorts whom Duran nailed in the balls for the title. He had excellent skills and a great heart, and you saw both whenever he was in the ring.

Buchanan was a dominant Scottish lightweight for years before Duran ever had his cojones on the radar screen. He went 33 fights without a loss (with 13 knockouts), all in the United Kingdom, before he made the mistake of going to Madrid, where he promptly was decisioned by Miguel Velazquez for the vacant European lightweight title. Talk about undeterred. Four fights later, he took a split decision over the tricky Ismael Laguna and became the first British lightweight champ since Welsh. He defended against Ruben Navarro, then survived a nasty cut to decision Laguna again in Madison Square Garden. It was one of Buchanan's finest performances. On the undercard, some wild Panamanian kid named Duran destroyed tough Benny Huertas in a round.

Contrary to popular belief, Buchanan's career didn't end after Duran scored the famous 13th-round kayo that brought to a fairly unsatisfying end a reasonably competitive fight. He fought 25 more times over 11 more years (though he took off 1976 through '78) and won a hell of a lot more than he lost. In his first fight after losing to Duran, he stopped faded former champion Carlos Ortiz in six. He beat future world champion Jim Watt in '73 to regain the British lightweight crown, and even fought for a world title again, losing a 15-rounder to WBC champ Ishimatsu Suzuki in Tokyo in '75. The rest you never heard of, and it's just as well. His last fight was an unsanctioned, seventh-round kayo of one Johnny Claydon in London in '83. Interestingly, Duran never gave Buchanan a rematch, even as "Hands Of Stone" was running out of lightweight opponents.

Only Duran knows why he never gave Buchanan a return. It wasn't because there was no money in it; Buchanan had gotten to be rather a favorite among the Madison Square Garden fans as a result of his exciting second win over Laguna and a 10-round points win over undefeated Canadian Donato Puduano. Duran and Buchanan generated $223,901 in receipts the night the title changed hands. That's not peanuts. So it wasn't that.

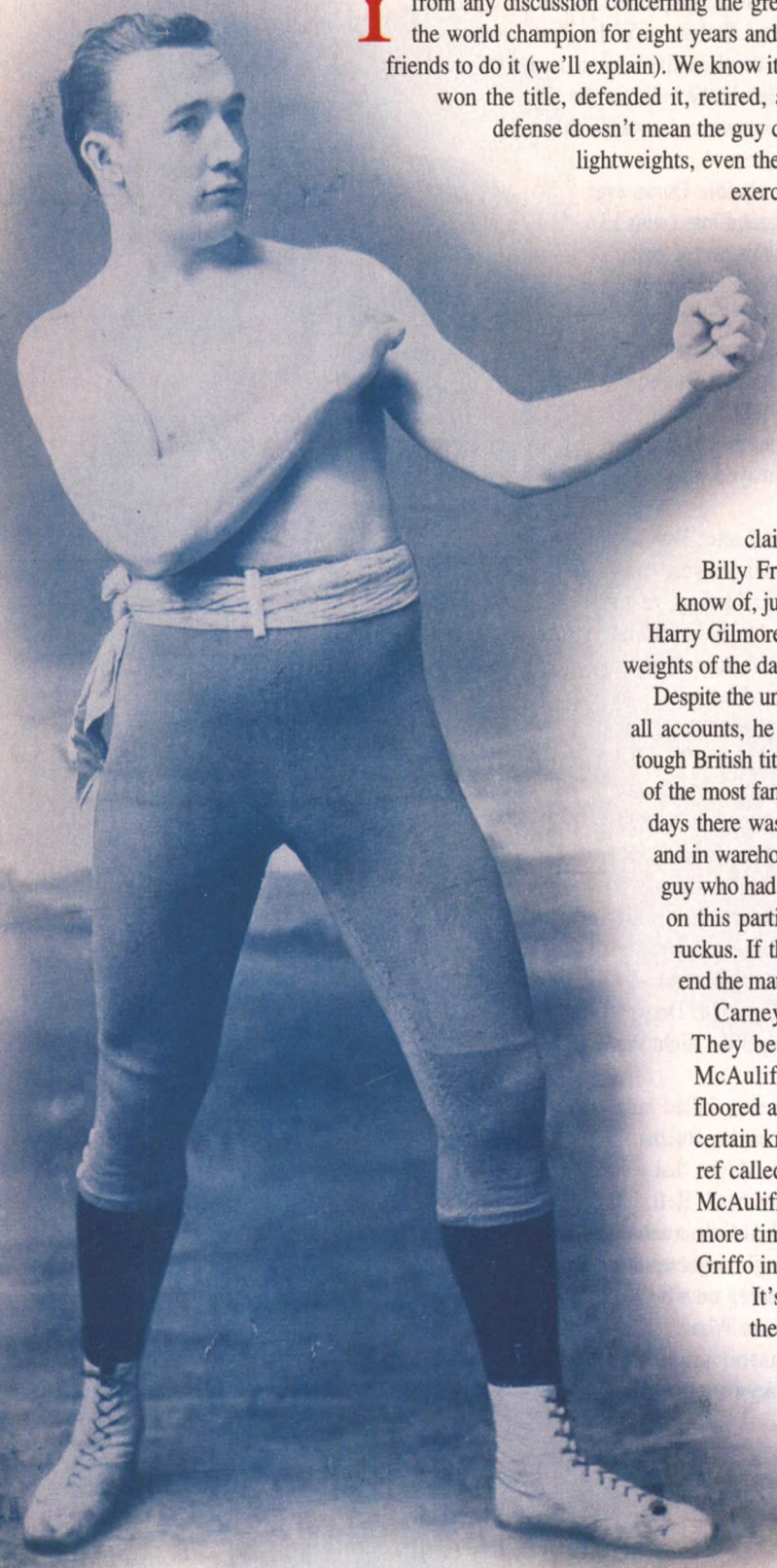
Later in his career—certainly before Thomas Hearns nearly killed him, one would imagine—Duran was quoted in some quarters as saying Buchanan was the toughest and most difficult fighter he'd ever faced. Maybe that was why he never met him again. But the fight wasn't all *that* hard. Hell, he dropped Buchanan with the first hard shot he landed and had little trouble rushing in and bulling him against the ropes. He did it all night, right up to the point when either his knee or an errant uppercut, depending on whom you ask, convinced Buchanan that he couldn't fight anymore. Whatever. See, even we're doing it—talking about Duran in Buchanan's space. Shame on us. That pale guy in the plaid shorts was one heck of a lightweight himself.



17 JACK McAULIFFE

42-0-5 (33) with 2 no-decisions

World Champion 1886-'94



You're not alone if you never heard of McAuliffe. Regardless, it would be unfair to exclude him from any discussion concerning the greatest lightweights ever, seeing as how the guy reigned as the world champion for eight years and retired undefeated, even if he needed some help from his friends to do it (we'll explain). We know it was a long time ago. But just because a guy lived, fought, won the title, defended it, retired, and died all before Tony Canzoneri made his first title defense doesn't mean the guy couldn't fight. Would he have competed at all with today's lightweights, even the mediocre ones? Doubtful. But that's not really what this exercise is about. It's about how a fighter did against his contemporaries—how well and for how long, and on those questions, McAuliffe is right there.

McAuliffe, who was born in Ireland but moved with his family to Bangor, Maine, caught the boxing bug at 16, when, according to the lore, he stretched out some English sailor in a bareknuckle fight in the basement of a Bangor store. He turned pro in 1884 after getting some guidance from Jack "The Nonpareil" Dempsey and before long was knocking stiff other little guys. He claimed the vacant world title with a 21-round knockout of Billy Frazier—who bore no relation to any fighting Fraziers we know of, just for the record—in '86 and proceeded to defend it against Harry Gilmore, Billy Myer, and Billy Dacey, among others, all top lightweights of the day.

Despite the undefeated record, McAuliffe wasn't unbeatable. According to all accounts, he was more or less getting the tar beaten out of him by the tough British titleholder Jem Carney in an '87 title defense that became one of the most famous and talked-about fights of the era. Remember, in those days there was no regulation to speak of, and fights took place on barges and in warehouses and such to avoid interference by the police. So when a guy who had friends in the crowd was getting whipped, as McAuliffe was on this particular occasion, his buddies rushed the ring and caused a ruckus. If they did it well enough, the referee, fearful of arrest, would end the match and call it a draw.

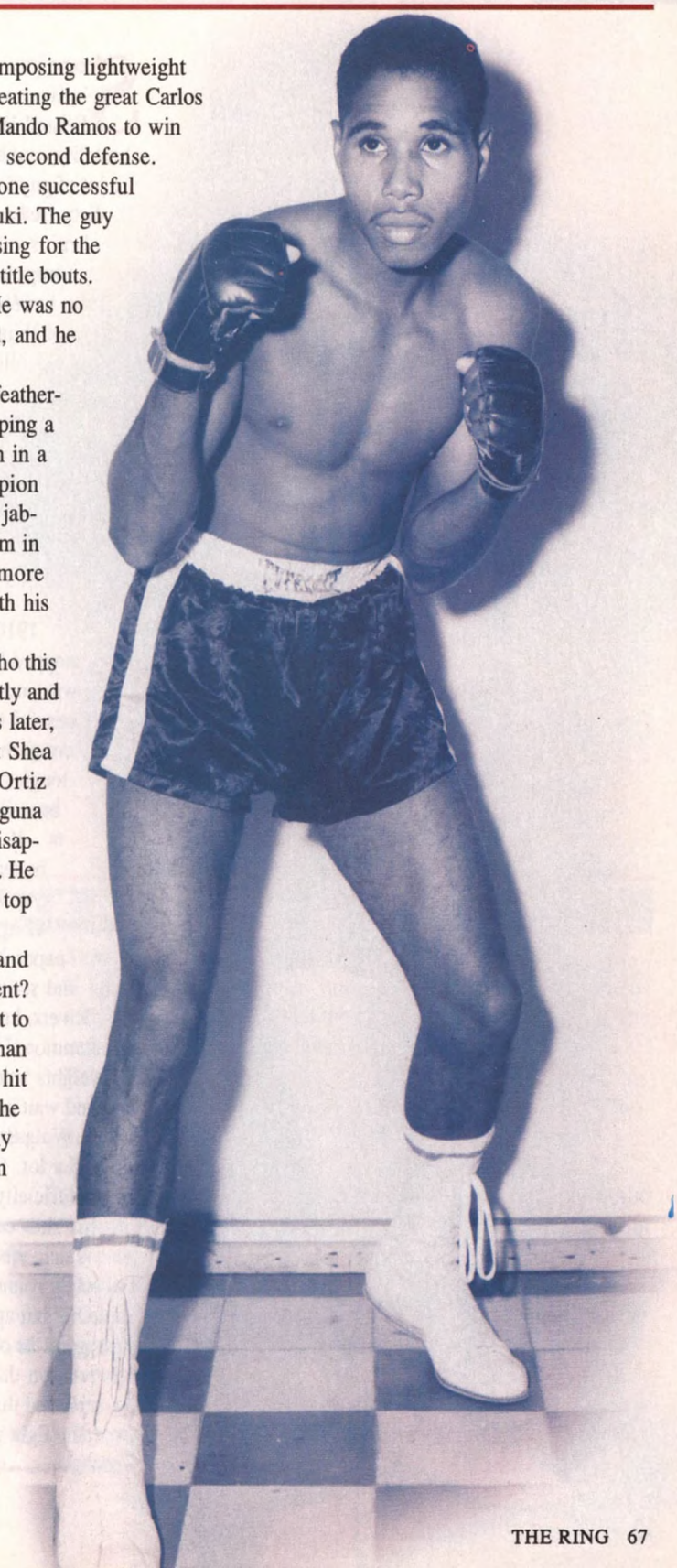
Carney decked McAuliffe in the seventh. McAuliffe got up. They beat one another senseless into the 70th round when McAuliffe, battered and exhausted, if you can believe it, was floored again. His cohorts rushed the ring and prevented an almost certain knockout loss. It happened again in the 74th round, and the ref called it a draw, allowing McAuliffe to retain the title. Funny, McAuliffe never fought Carney again, but defended the title a few more times and even decisioned eventual Hall of Famer Young Griffo in '94.

It's interesting that in an era when guys typically retired after their 200th or so match, McAuliffe walked away after just 47. Assuredly this contributed—along with a little help from his friends—to the undefeated record. Either way, he was the standout of his era, and that's why he's here.

18 ISMAEL LAGUNA

65-9-1 (37)

World Champion 1965, '70



At first glance, Laguna may appear one of the least imposing lightweight champions in history. He was entirely inconsistent, beating the great Carlos Ortiz for the title, then losing to him twice, beating Mando Ramos to win the title again, then losing it to Ken Buchanan in just his second defense. Between his two brief reigns as champion, he made just one successful defense, that against future WBC titleholder Ishimatsu Suzuki. The guy was all over the place, and by the time he got out—after losing for the second time to Buchanan—he'd won just three of seven world title bouts. The numbers are deceiving, however. The guy could fight. He was no puncher, but he had a great jab, he was quick and awkward, and he made good fighters look bad.

Fighting solely out of Colon and Panama City and as a featherweight, Laguna went 27-0 (19) to start his career before dropping a 10-rounder to Antonio Herrera in Bogota. He then won seven in a row before losing a decision to future featherweight champion Vicente Saldivar in Tijuana. Five fights later, he could be seen jabbing the daylights out of the great Ortiz at the Anoche Stadium in Panama City. Just 21 years old and quicker-handed and more mobile than anyone Ortiz had faced, Laguna cut up Ortiz with his jab and survived a late rally to eke out a majority win.

After a pair of non-title fights, Laguna faced Ortiz again, who this time was prepared for him. He countered Laguna's jab brilliantly and took an easy decision. The rubber match, contested two years later, yielded the same result. The 18,160 fans who showed up at Shea Stadium, if you can believe it, were disappointed when Ortiz advanced and Laguna retreated all night. It was a bore, and Laguna was to blame. A lot of guys at the time expected him just to disappear after that. Hell, most of them wished he would. He didn't. He hung around and kept winning and, three years later, was the top contender for Ramos' title.

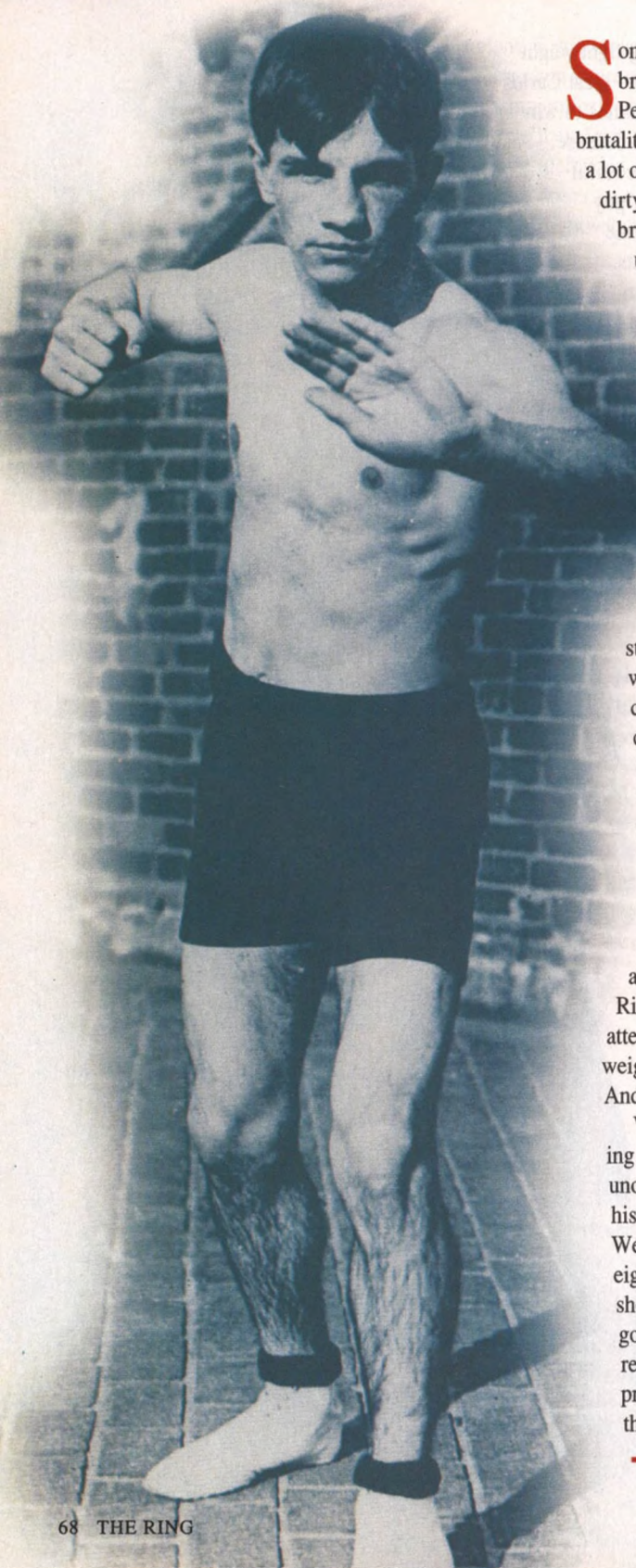
Laguna was brilliant, cutting Ramos over both eyes and pounding him to a ninth-round defeat. How's that for resurgent? Then came the defense against Suzuki, and that was it. He lost to Buchanan in a squeaker, then to Eddie Linder, then to Buchanan again when, for some reason, he tried to turn brawler. He hit Buchanan on the break, hit and held, punched low. Maybe he knew that was all he could do. It didn't work, and he was nearly stopped late, but he held on to hear the decision go against him by a wide margin. Then he was done. He announced his retirement in April of 1972.

Laguna was no top-10 all-time lightweight. It's difficult to imagine him going the distance with a prime Duran, whose increasingly frightening presence may have influenced Laguna's decision to retire when he did. We're not sure he'd have lasted with Beau Jack or Bob Montgomery or Shane Mosley. But he was a solid guy, and if you weren't on top of your game he could squeak by you. Ask Ortiz.

19 AD WOLGAST

60-11-14 (40) with 47 no-decisions

World Champion 1910-'12



Some guys achieve ring immortality by using their brain more than their brawn, and their speed more than their power. Benny Leonard and Pernell Whitaker are perfect examples. They use technique rather than brutality, and a nice straight jab rather than a wild left hook. That worked for a lot of guys. It did not work for Wolgast. What worked for him was being a dirty, relentless, tough-as-steel streetfighter who wanted to beat your brains out with his bare hands if they let him. He was crude and unapologetic, and there wasn't a lightweight—with the possible exception of Roberto Duran, with whom Wolgast shared some things in common, philosophically—with whom one would want less to share a dark alley. This was not a nice guy.

Wolgast engaged in some of the most famous and most controversial and revered lightweight fights of the early 1900s. Who by now has not heard or read about his famous brawl with Mexican Joe Rivers? You remember, where Wolgast and Rivers were beating one another half to death until the 13th round, when both went down at the same time and the referee, Jack Welch, helped up Wolgast while counting out Rivers. Or how about his savage 1910 title-winning war with fellow miscreant Battling Nelson? He stopped Nelson in the 40th round of a battle so bloody and foul-filled, it was considered brutal even by 1910 standards. He only made one successful title defense—the Rivers fight—but he took on some tough comp in non-title bouts. Most notable was his 13th-round stoppage of tough former bantamweight champion Owen Moran, who had never been floored before Wolgast put him to sleep with a left hook.

If Wolgast wasn't such an animal, maybe he could have been a better lightweight champion, or a longer-reigning one at least, but you have to take the bad with the good. He lost the belt on a foul in '12 against Willie Ritchie, whom he had unofficially beaten by newspaper decision just a few months prior. He got right back in the ring and started winning again: 10-round newspaper nods over Nelson and Rivers, knockouts of Jack Redmond and Rudy Unholz. But nobody paid attention. It was payback time as far as the rest of the world's top lightweights were concerned. Wolgast would wait for another shot at the title. And wait he did.

Wolgast fought 48 times over the next four years, winning some, losing a lot. Frank Whitney and Leach Cross stopped him, Rocky Kansas unofficially decisioned him, and so did Ritchie in a return. By the time his shot came, it was '16 and he was all used up. The stylish Freddie Welsh, who had beaten Ritchie for the title, and who stopped Wolgast in eight rounds back in a '14 non-title bout, won in the 11th when Wolgast, shot but apparently still proud of being dirty, fouled out. Again. It was as good as over then. He fought a few more times, probably for no other reason than to keep himself from going nuts. If nothing else, Wolgast proved that if you're crazy enough and ornery enough, there's a place in the fight game for you. He made the most of what he had.

20 OSCAR DE LA HOYA

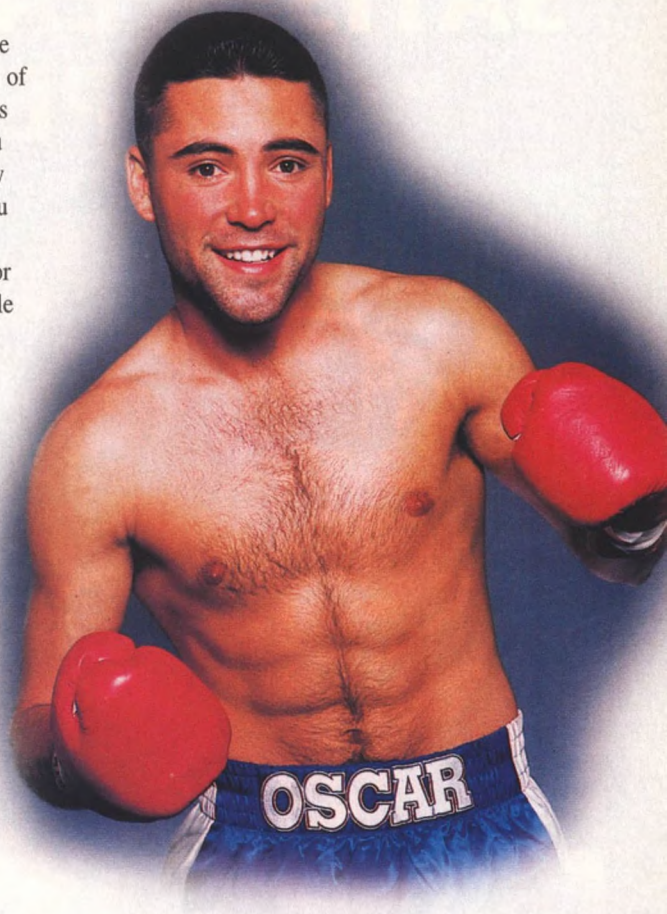
33-2 (27)

IBF Champion 1995

For the Oscar haters out there—you know who you are—this one might be hard to digest, but hear us out: Sometimes the quality of opposition a guy faces in a particular division and how he handles that opposition makes up for extended tenure in that weight class. You must give a fighter credit for taking on and obliterating high-quality fighters, even if he's gone and on to the next weight class faster than you can say, "Golden Boy."

Admittedly, De La Hoya picked on a used-up, blown-up opponent for his first fight at lightweight, when he won the lightly regarded WBO title in a second-round blowout of former featherweight champ Jorge Paez. It didn't make him a champion, and Carl Griffith and John Avila, his next two opponents, weren't any better. It doesn't matter. Because in his next four fights, all of which were contested at lightweight, De La Hoya beat former or reigning world champions John-John Molina, Rafael Ruelas (for the IBF title), Genaro Hernandez (undefeated until De La Hoya battered him), and Jesse James Leija. Only Molina lasted the distance.

You can say they were above their best weight, or were past their best days. But the Molina De La Hoya decisioned and the Leija he overpowered were better and younger than the versions Shane Mosley whipped three years later. Ruelas, you'll remember, was supposed to be De La Hoya's big test. After De La Hoya crushed him in two rounds, the big test was Hernandez, a seasoned and well-respected champion. De La Hoya made him quit after five. So you can hate De La Hoya if you like. He makes it easy enough. But give him credit for the business he got done at lightweight. He deserves that much. ■



HONORABLE MENTION

Everyone can't make it to the top 20. It wouldn't be the top 20 then, would it? Here are the next 10, in alphabetical order.

Sammy Angott
A 3-0 record against Bob Montgomery and a knockout of Ike Williams make him the number-four lightweight of that '40s bunch.

Alexis Arguello
If "The Explosive Thin Man" hadn't gotten greedy and gone after Aaron Pryor, he could have reigned for a long time at 135.

Jimmy Carter
Carter wasn't the most exciting guy in the world, but he was good enough to beat a faded Ike Williams and enjoy two reigns as champion.

Julio Cesar Chavez
Chavez' stay at lightweight was brief but spectacular: He destroyed Edwin Rosario, Rodolfo Aguilar, and Jose Luis Ramirez.

Miguel Angel Gonzalez
Gonzalez made 10 defenses of the WBC title, but his competition was unspectacular and he positively froze whenever he stepped up.

Steve Johnston
If Johnston took on tougher competition and had been more consistent, he might have cracked the top 20. Still, he made seven title defenses over two exciting reigns—and he may not be done yet.

Battling Nelson
Nelson twice stopped an ailing Joe Gans and made it into the 40th—yes, the 40th—round with Ad Wolgast.

Jose Luis Ramirez
They didn't come any tougher or more seasoned than Ramirez, who took on all the best lightweights of the 1980s and never was a walk in the park.

Edwin Rosario
"Chapo" was flawed, but he was among the hardest-hitting lightweights ever. Ask Livingstone Bramble.

Barney Ross
Ross made his name at welterweight, but two decisions over Tony Canzoneri at 135—even if they probably were unjust—are hard to ignore.

Hungry For A Superstar ... Hungry For Superstardom

CAN ARUM & JONES SATISFY EACH OTHER'S APPETITES?

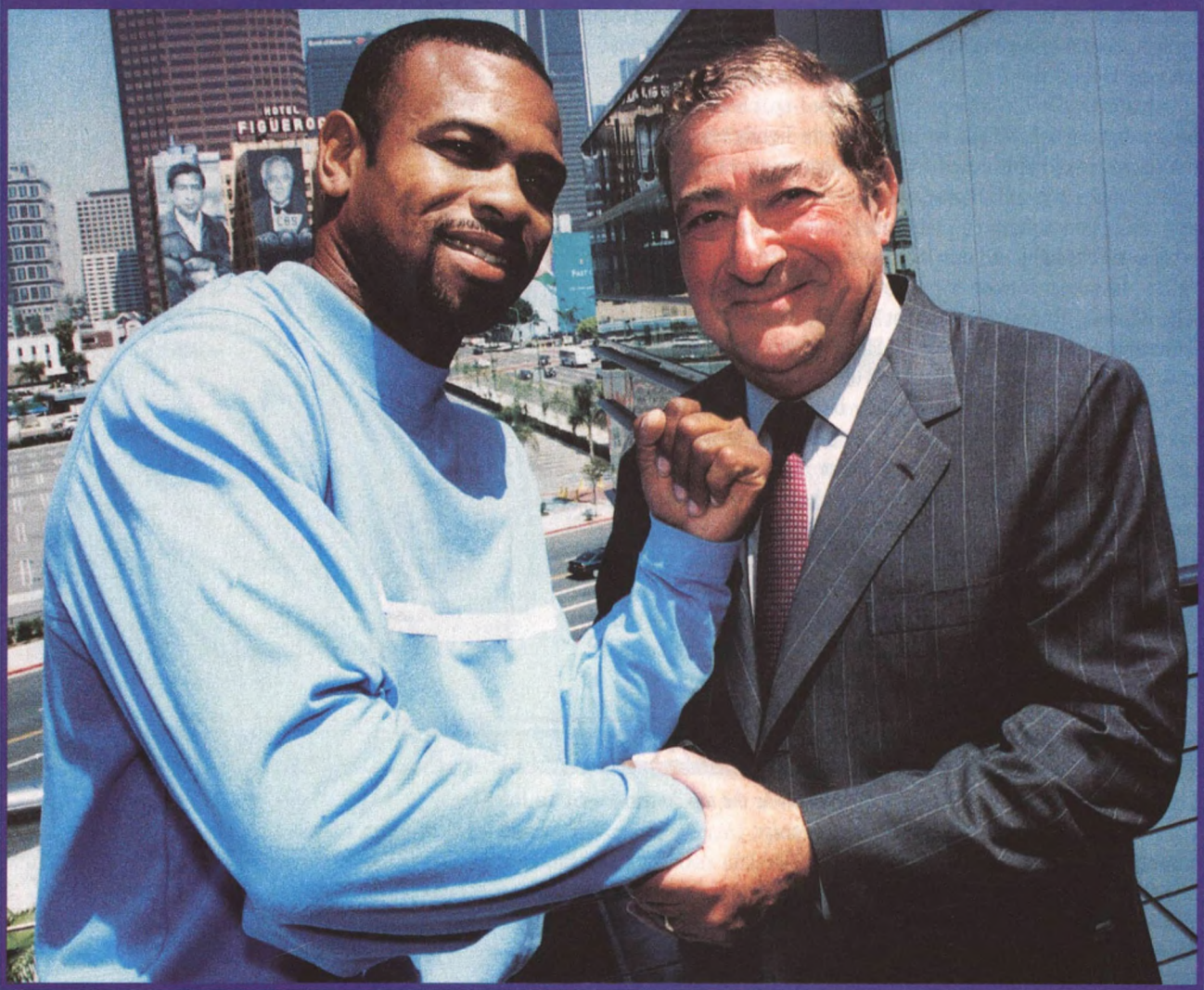


PHOTO COURTESY OF TOP RANK

By Nigel Collins

Bob and Roy. Roy and Bob. Any way you say it, it sounds like the name of an vaudeville comedy team, or maybe something you see plastered on a billboard along the Las Vegas Strip. But this is boxing, and the pairing of Hall of Fame promoter Bob Arum and undisputed light heavyweight champion Roy Jones has not only provided a new beginning for both men, it's also created boxing's latest odd couple.

Regardless of how long the relationship between the brilliant but volatile Arum and the enigmatic Jones endures, it should be fascinating watching them interact. Even more intriguing will be finding out if Arum can accomplish what no other promoter has been able to do—turn Jones into a major pay-per-view attraction.

"Bob knows how to promote, and he could very well inject some promotional

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

In recent years, Jones' career has been hampered by a series of ill-advised matches, including one with embarrassingly inept New York City cop Rick Frazier (top) in 1999. Last year, Jones recorded a TKO win over Eric Harding (above), but the pay-per-view sold poorly.

life into Roy's career," said Ross Greenburg, president of HBO Sports.

The timing for the Jones-Arum partnership is well-timed, as both are at a point where their careers are in urgent need of a major overhaul. Arum had recently lost his meal ticket when Oscar De La Hoya flew the Top Rank coop. On top of that, the Las Vegas-based promoter had also been disciplined by both the Nevada and California commissions in the aftermath of his testimony in the IBF trial, where he admitted to having made payments to the IBF in order to obtain favorable rankings for certain fighters he promoted. Jones, meanwhile, despite his status as one of the most gifted fighters of his era, had lately seen his prestige and pound-for-pound rating deteriorate due to a series of lackluster performances against nondescript opponents. Both men were ready for the fresh start that working together would provide.

"With De La Hoya gone, Arum is hungry for a new superstar," agreed Greenburg.

It's funny how things work out. It wasn't too long ago that Arum was at dagger-points with James Prince, the rap entrepreneur who manages Arum's other major attraction, WBC super featherweight champion Floyd Mayweather. But that was back before the promoter and Prince figured out that they could accomplish far more working together than they could playing tug-of-war over the services of "Pretty Boy Floyd." Today, Arum credits Prince with planting the seed that brought Jones and him together.

"When Roy was in town about six weeks ago, James Prince, who is friendly with me and friendly with Roy, set up a meeting in my office," explained Arum the day after holding a press conference to announce Jones' next fight, July 28, against Julio Gonzalez at the Los Angeles Staples Center. "Roy told me to come up with a game plan, but not come up with a game plan that ties him up forever. We both wanted to see how we can work together. But if everything goes well, why wouldn't he continue to stay?"

At this juncture, Arum and Jones are like a couple of fighters feeling each other out in the first round of a big fight. Arum, a proven star-maker, is convinced he can make Jones bigger than ever, and would like to have a long-term agreement with the temperamental three-division champ. Jones, however, is being as cautious at the negotiating table as he frequently is inside the ring. For now, he wants to see what he's getting before committing to a multifight contract, and has, therefore, only signed a one-fight deal with Arum. Even so, the Gonzalez bout won't be the first time Arum has promoted one of Jones' fights.

"I promoted his fight with James Toney, which was a helluva promotion, and did extremely well," said Arum. "He told me that the reason he decided to go out on his own after the Toney fight was because he wanted his promoter to be

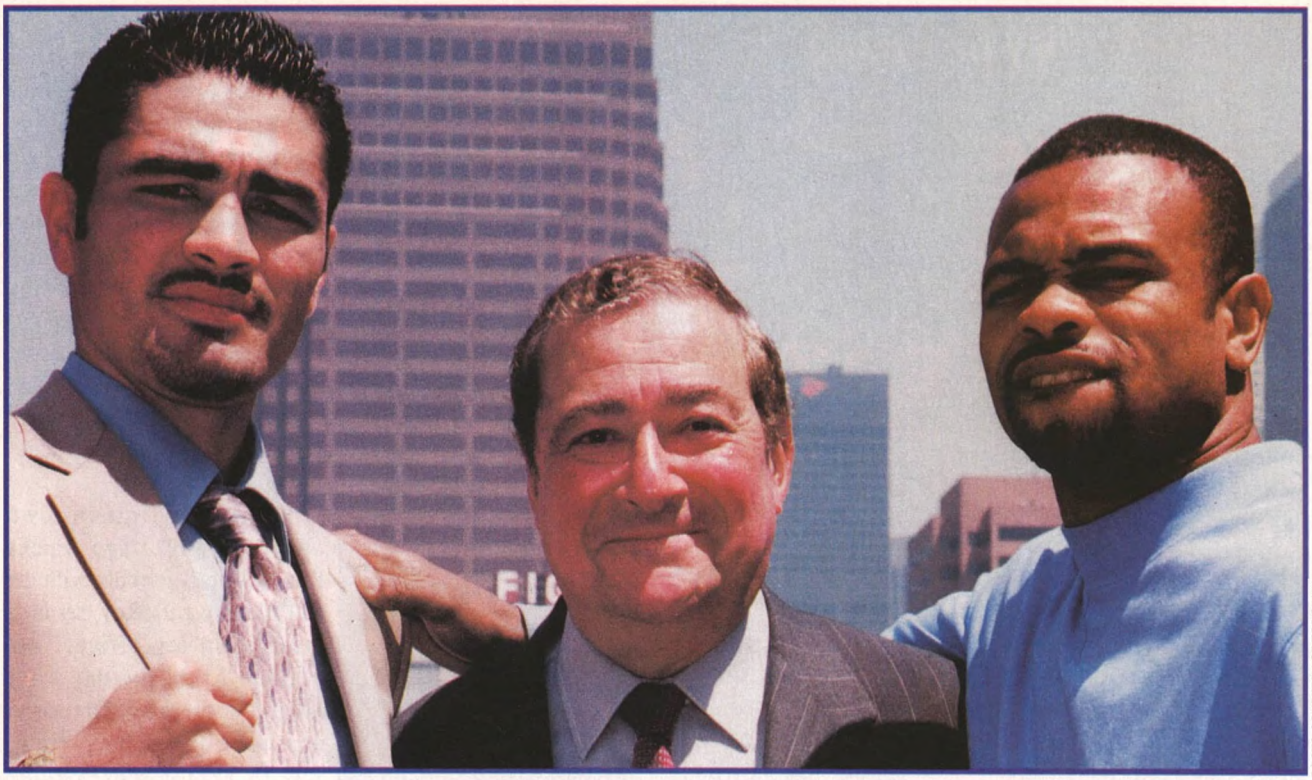


PHOTO COURTESY OF TOP RANK

Arum (center) poses with undefeated Julio Gonzalez and Jones at the Los Angeles press conference held in April to announce their June 28 bout for Jones' undisputed light heavyweight title at the Staples Center.

100 percent in his corner, and I had obviously sided with Toney, with whom I'd had a much longer relationship."

Looking back, it might have been the worst decision Jones ever made. In many ways, the Toney victory was the high-water mark of his career—and that was back in 1994. Jones has won a lot of fights and made a lot of money since then, but he has never achieved the sort of stardom a fighter of his magnificent gifts should have attained. Part of that has to do with Jones himself, and part of it has to do with the fact that following his win over Toney, the fiercely independent Jones aligned himself with people who simply weren't in Arum's league as promoters.

PHOTO BY NASSER KHAN

The last time Jones and Arum worked together, Jones won the IBF super middleweight title with a unanimous decision over previously undefeated James Toney. It was one of the best performances of Jones' career, and rocketed him near the top of most pound-for-pound lists.

"Roy certainly hasn't maximized his potential as an attraction," said Arum. "The mistake is that he was around people who didn't know what they were doing from a promotional point of view. Even though we do things differently, there are only two promoters who really know how to promote at this level. That's me and [Don] King."

You'd think promoting a fighter as talented as Jones would be the easiest thing in the world. But even with his vast experience and know-how, Arum will have to call upon all of his creativity to bring Jones anywhere close to being another De La Hoya at the box office. Besides his moody disposition, Jones is perceived not only as a fighter without

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Between the two of them, Jones and Dariusz Michalczewski have won a lot of championship belts, but so far the pair have not been able to come to terms for a showdown. Arum, however, has a plan to accomplish just that, providing he works with Jones beyond the Gonzalez fight.

worthy opponents, but also as one who would rather play with outclassed opponents than put them out of their misery with a fan-pleasing knockout. It's a problem with which Arum has evidently wrestled.

"When he's in with a guy who is really inferior and who is in there to survive, Roy will let him survive while he demonstrates his boxing skills," said Arum. "What do you do to counter that? You don't tell him to change the way he fights. You get him a gutty, determined opponent who's gonna make him fight. Gonzalez is gonna come at him and he's gonna throw punches. The only way that Roy is going to be able to stop him is to knock him out. He won't be able to play with Gonzalez. You don't play with a guy who's like a wild tiger. You're going to see a different Roy Jones in this fight, not because of Bob Arum, but because of the opponent Bob Arum selected."

Arum's matchmaking instincts have always been excellent, but in this case, he's lucky that the right guy came along when he did. Until recently, Gonzalez was just another undefeated clubfighter plugging away in the hope of someday breaking into the big time. Then in February, he got the opportunity he'd been waiting for when he was matched with Julian "Mr. KO" Letterlough on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. It turned out to be a wildly entertaining slugfest, with Gonzalez surviving three knockdowns to win a 12-round decision. And while Gonzalez poses little in the way of a real threat to Jones, Arum is probably right when he says that the gritty challenger from Huntington Beach, California, will make Jones look good by forcing him to fight.

But then what?

Providing they come to a long-term agreement following the Gonzalez fight, Arum would like to match Jones with Welsh super middleweight Joe Calzaghe. When reminded that Calzaghe means virtually nothing to fans in the United States, Arum was unfazed.

"So what?" he snapped. "The bottom line is money. Roy and Calzaghe in England could generate a gate of $6- or $7-million, plus huge pay-per-view income."

The fight with Calzaghe would be the first part of Arum's plan for Jones to invade Europe. The really big money on

that side of the Atlantic, however, would be a fight with Dariusz Michalcewski, and Arum is well aware that Jones is disinclined to fight the undefeated German on his home turf. But if things go well in the U.K. against Calzaghe, who knows what Arum might persuade Jones to do.

"I think stories of fighters losing decisions in Germany have freaked Roy a little bit," said Arum. "But if we get married and our marriage lasts, Roy might very well develop a different attitude."

Of course, if you listen to King, Jones will eventually be fighting the winner of King's middleweight championship unification tournament in, to quote The Hairy One, "The first non-heavyweight $100-million fight in boxing history." You'd think Arum would be worried that he'll waste his time and expertise building Jones into a bigger star than he ever has been, only to have King steal him away.

"If Trinidad wins the tournament and wants to move up in weight to fight Roy, he's got to come to Roy," said Arum. "Then an appropriate arrangement will have to be made between King and myself. Roy is smart enough and experienced enough to know that he ain't going into a promotion with Don King without a promoter on his side to protect him."

Another thing that Jones has done in the past that goes against Arum's grain is preserve his alphabet belts by making mandatory defenses against inept and undeserving challengers foisted upon him by the WBC, WBA, and IBF.

"You cannot be a big-time fighter and worry about these stupid mandatories, especially when you have all the titles," said Arum.

We couldn't agree more. But gaining Jones' confidence and finding the right opponents won't automatically guarantee that he will finally become all that he can be. Jones' frequently contentious relationship with the media will also have to improve. But, according to Arum, the discord between the fighter and the folks who cover him has been rooted in miscommunication.

"Roy believed that he always cooperated with the media," said Arum. "The problem was that the people with him, the promoters, didn't handle him correctly. Everything was a surprise. Everything was winged. We lay out what we want him to do. We discuss it with him at length. With us, there will be as few surprises as possible. I have experience with the guy. Looking at his psyche, he really rebels if he thinks he's being pushed. But when you present him with a plan, and he agrees with the plan and knows what to expect, there's no problem."

Perhaps. But despite the fact that THE RING wanted to talk to Jones for this article, Top Rank was unable to procure him for a five-minute phone conversation prior to our deadline. Maybe we weren't part of the plan. Maybe Arum's p.r. machine hasn't had enough time to turn Jones into a charmer. Then again, maybe the more things change, the more they stay the same. ■

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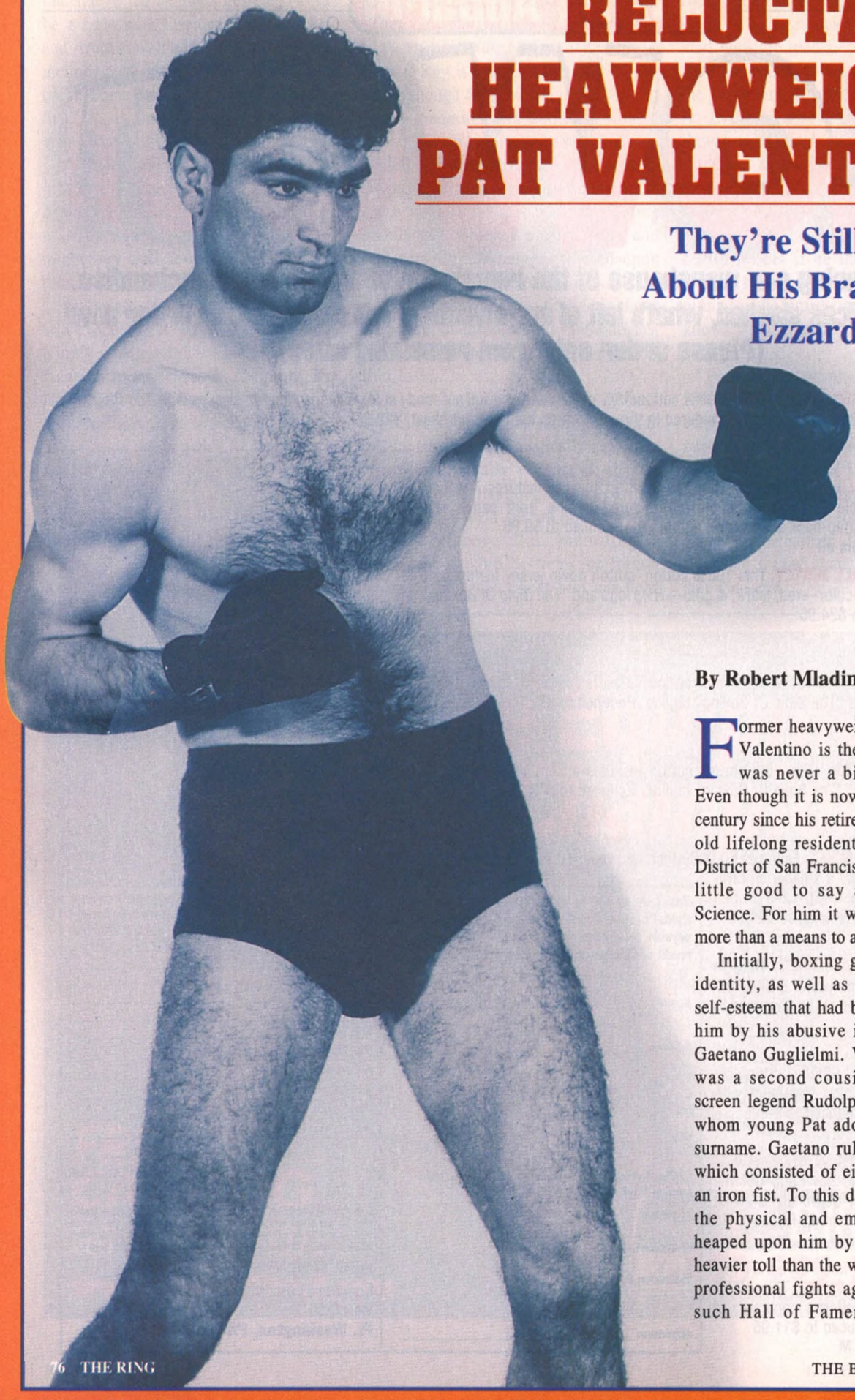


RELUCTANT HEAVYWEIGHT PAT VALENTINO

They're Still Talking About His Brawl With Ezzard Charles

By Robert Mladinich

Former heavyweight contender Pat Valentino is the first to admit he was never a big fan of boxing. Even though it is now more than a half century since his retirement, the 81-year-old lifelong resident of the Excelsior District of San Francisco, California, has little good to say about the Sweet Science. For him it was always nothing more than a means to an end.

Initially, boxing gave Valentino an identity, as well as the much-needed self-esteem that had been stripped from him by his abusive immigrant father, Gaetano Guglielmi. Valentino's father was a second cousin to Hollywood screen legend Rudolph Valentino, from whom young Pat adopted his fighting surname. Gaetano ruled his household, which consisted of eight children, with an iron fist. To this day, Valentino says the physical and emotional brutality heaped upon him by his father took a heavier toll than the wear and tear of 57 professional fights against the likes of such Hall of Famers as Joe Louis,

Valentino and Ezzard Charles weigh in for their epic October 1949 heavyweight title bout in San Francisco. Valentino's manager, Jack Andrade (to Valentino's left, wearing jacket and tie), gave his fighter only four weeks to train for the fight.

Ezzard Charles, Jimmy Bivins, and Joey Maxim.

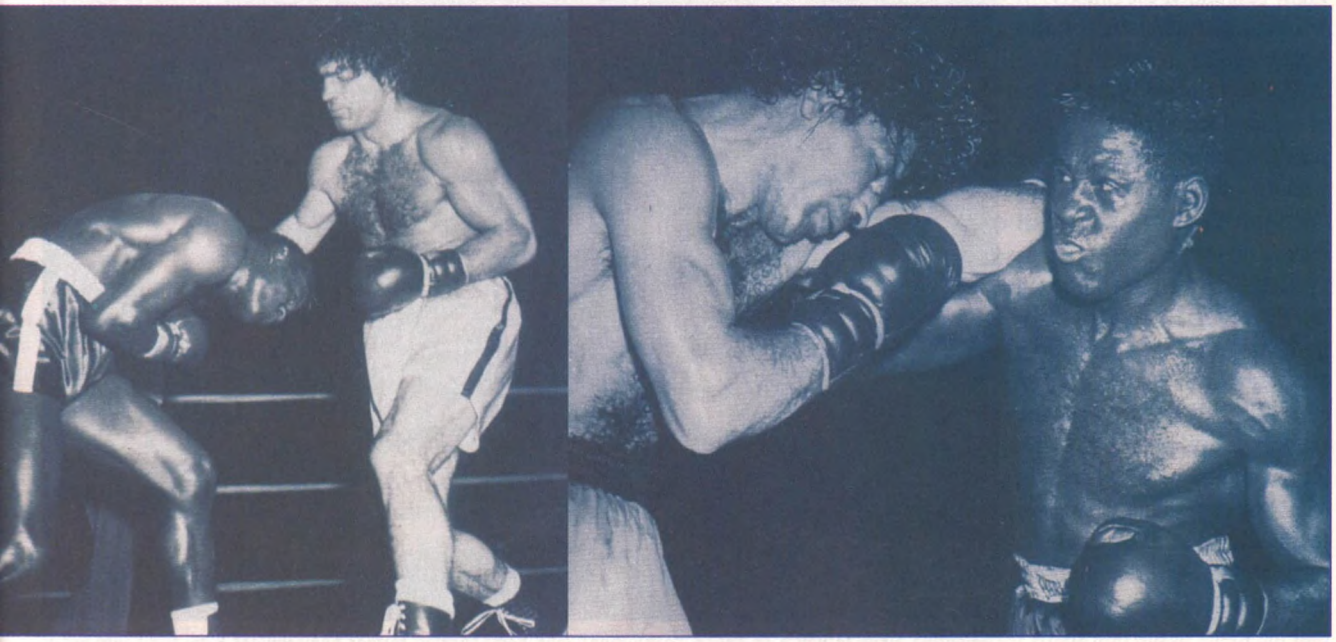
In the end, the sport left Valentino not only blind in his right eye, but also with feelings of great ambivalence that last to this day.

"I didn't like boxing at all; I still don't like it," said Valentino, whose final ring record was 42-11-4 (20). "When you're doing something, especially something as dangerous as boxing, you have to like it to be successful. I used to have trouble finishing someone off. I'd hurt them, then stop hitting them. I had no killer instinct."

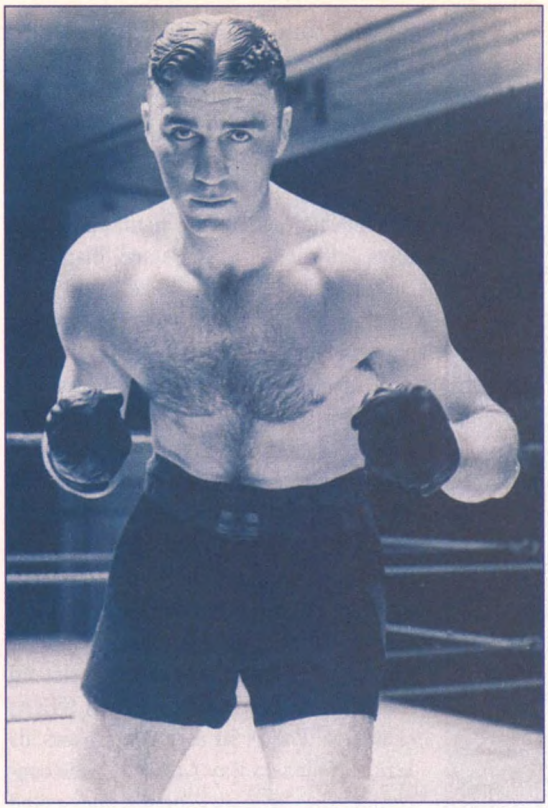
Anyone who witnessed his thrilling October 1949 battle with Charles would beg to differ with that assessment. Although a 7-1 underdog, Valentino, fighting before 19,590 maniacal hometown fans at the Cow Palace, displayed such fury, it looked as if he could have beaten anyone in the world except the champion that night.

Three fights earlier, Charles had won a tournament to determine a successor to Joe Louis, the recently retired longtime heavyweight champion. However, the New York State Athletic Commission, which was then widely considered a sanctioning entity unto itself, refused to recognize him as champion. While many others viewed Charles as the rightful heir to Louis, on paper he was only considered the National Boxing Association (NBA) champion. But as far as Valentino and his legion of diehard Bay Area fans were concerned, the fight was for the undisputed heavyweight championship of the world.

Eddie Muller, the esteemed, 30-year boxing writer for the *San Francisco Examiner*, called it "the greatest fight I ever saw." He wrote: "[It was] drama-packed, spine-tingling, and vicious from the opening bell, until a somewhat bewildered and weary Ezzard Charles finally ended the savage duel at 35 seconds of the eighth round. In that 21 minutes, these



The Charles-Valentino bout turned out to be one of the most exciting fights ever seen in the Bay Area, with both men dishing out plenty of punishment. In the end, however, Charles' superior firepower proved too much for 7-1 underdog Valentino, who was stopped in the eighth round.



San Francisco light heavyweight contender Ray Actis was the boyhood hero of Valentino and inspired him to take up boxing.

stalwarts had me ducking, wincing, and shouting like any paying customer in the enormous Cow Palace, which rocked to its very foundation."

When reminded of Muller's description, Valentino, who sometimes seems modest and humble to a fault, responded laughingly, "I wouldn't go that far. That seems a bit much."

But when pressed further, he became more animated as he recalled the evening he came within a hairsbreadth of winning the sporting world's greatest honor.

"I just had an operation on my right eye and was out of the gym for [almost a year]," he recalled. "Three or four days after getting the okay to resume training, my manager, who turned out to be a louse, told me, 'You're fighting Charles in four weeks.' I said, 'I can't be in shape to fight the champ in that time; push it back a bit.' He just told me to get in the best shape I could."

That manager was Jack Andrade, a used car dealer with whom Valentino would have a contentious and litigious relationship for years to come. He had taken over the managerial reins from Dolph Thomas, who Valentino said "didn't know a thing about the fight game. The only advice he ever gave me was 'punch, punch, punch.'"

Although nowhere near peak condition, Valentino acquiesced to Andrade's wishes and engaged in the fight of his life against one of the most underrated heavyweight champions in history. The rousing battle ended when Valentino was dropped for good with a left hook and short right hand that traveled no more than a few inches before landing squarely on his jaw. Wrote Muller: "Those two blows, thrown with such accuracy that they would have threaded a needle, did tremendous damage. They quelled a fighting man with a fighting heart, and kept him down on the canvas a full 10 seconds."

"I broke some of Charles' ribs, and really think I would have won that fight had I been in better condition," said Valentino, who earned $5,000. "To this day I have no doubt that my poor conditioning was the only thing that cost me the fight."

Valentino's legacy as a Bay Area sports celebrity was enhanced greatly by his gallant effort, but his next bout, against the once great Joe Louis in Chicago, would be his last. Although the fight, which was officially called an exhibition, took place just seven weeks after the Charles debacle, it was scheduled for 10 rounds and would also be remembered for its all-out action. In another trench war, Valentino was once again stopped in the eighth round. He was paid $7,500.

"My manager kept telling me to go easy on him," recalled Valentino. "I would say, 'What do you mean go easy on him, it's a fight isn't it?' I wound up listening to him anyway, and for the first three rounds I'm doing what I was asked, trying not to hurt Louis. Louis hit like hell, and he's whacking me all over the place. Finally, in the third round I went after him, hit him in the body with some pretty good shots. I came back to my corner, and Andrade says, 'What are you doing, trying to knock out this guy?' At that point I got so mad I called him an SOB, the first time I ever said that to his

Valentino signs to box a so-called "exhibition" with comebacking former heavyweight king Joe Louis for a purse of $7,500. That's fight backer Bill Kyne sitting between the two fighters.

Down for the count: Referee Dave Miller comes to Valentino's aid at the conclusion of his bout with Louis in Chicago. Valentino, already blind in one eye, suffered an eighth-round knockout and never fought again.

face, even though I knew that's what he was for a long time."

What nobody except Valentino and Andrade knew was that Valentino had gone into the Louis exhibition completely blind in his right eye.

"During the eye test at the weigh-in, I brought my right hand over my right eye and read the chart with my good eye," he recalled. "Then I used my left hand to cover my right eye and nobody noticed."

The eye had originally been injured in the first of three Bay Area ethnic turf battles with arch-rival Tony Bosnich. Valentino's lineage was full-blooded Italian, while Bosnich was of Slovenian descent. Their first fight was declared a draw in the very first round when Bosnich opened up a deep gash on Valentino's eye with a headbutt. Valentino lost a controversial 10-round decision to Bosnich less than a month later, then beat him soundly to capture a 15-round decision in their third and final bout.

"I never believed Tony deserved the decision in our second fight, so I was determined to beat him bad in the third fight," said Valentino. "I gave him the beating of his life, a body beating that was just awful. I was later told that he urinated blood for three weeks afterward."

Hearing such talk from the usually mild-mannered Valentino, who speaks so candidly about having no shortage of personal demons, only serves to make him more of an enigma. He's the first to admit that, as a youngster, he was afraid of everything and everybody.

"If I was walking down a street and a perfect stranger was walking toward me, I would cross the street to avoid them," he recalled. "Besides being very poor, my father was very abusive to me and my seven brothers and sisters. We all had bad childhoods, just awful childhoods."

While the family patriarch had no particular fondness for any of his children, he singled out Pat for the brunt of his abuse.

"I was the fifth oldest, and he just hated my guts," said Valentino. "I was constantly getting backhanded across the face for no reason at all. Because my skin was darker than my brothers and sisters, he would call me 'Mexican,' 'Blackie,' and worse. He just hated me, pure and simple."

Valentino said his father would not part with a nickel, so he and his siblings often found themselves going to school barefoot, without as much as a bagged lunch, a notebook, or a pencil. Forced to drop out of school in the seventh grade, he first worked as a newsboy, earning a penny for each 10-cent paper sold. All of the money he made was immediately forked over to his father for room and board. What little spare time he had was spent at the family produce stand for no pay at all. About the only positive role model in young Valentino's life was a local light heavyweight named Ray Actis, who would eventually fight Billy Conn in San Francisco.

"All of us kids looked up to Ray; it was a thrill just to wave at him," Valentino recalled. "I was ringside when he fought Conn. He had him down in the third round, and Conn didn't know where he was. It looked like he was hit with a crowbar. Ray eventually got stopped in the eighth round, but what a fight that was."

Actis had no way of knowing that three years earlier he had been Valentino's inspiration for learning how to box.

"I first went to the local CYO, and the coach says, 'You want to box?'" recalled Valentino. "I said okay, then *bam, bam, bam,* he had someone just beat the hell out of me. I had a black eye and bruises. When I got home my father hit me with a left hook, and told me to never go back to the gym."

Determined to get out from under his emotional quagmire through boxing, the relentless Valentino would not give up. Except the next time, he took a more furtive

approach. He visited another gym, on Church Street, which was across Mission, a major line of demarcation in San Francisco. In a city noted for its neighborhood designations, he might as well have been going to Timbuktu.

"The same thing happened again," recalled Valentino. "I took a beating, went home bruised, my father swatted me, and I couldn't say or do anything because I was so afraid of him."

Finding yet another gym, this time in the downtown area, Valentino took another dreadful beating, only to come home and get it again from Daddy Dearest. Finally, Valentino's brother Frankie stepped in to save him from further abuse.

PHOTO BY GREGORY HART PINCHBECK

Still looking good at the age of 81, Valentino poses outside of Scoma's restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf, where he worked as a maitre d' for 22 years after retiring from the ring.

"He said, 'For Chrissakes, Pat, if you want to box, I'll get you a manager and we'll learn the right way,'" said Valentino.

The two made an appointment to meet former lightweight contender Tommy Cello, another local hero who had achieved almost mythical Bay Area status. Working with such a positive influence, Valentino proved to be an apt pupil, but could still not get over many of the fears that had been spawned during his frightful childhood.

"He taught me how to hold my hands up, and I started learning the basics really quick," said Valentino. "But I was still afraid of everybody. It took me 10 years to get over those fears. Even in the gym changing clothes, I couldn't hold my knees together because they shook so hard."

Although he was exactly six-feet tall and rarely weighed more than 177 pounds, under Cello's tutelage Valentino became a leading heavyweight contender within a decade. By the time he fought Charles at the age of 29, he had beaten the well-known and respected Solly Krieger, and avenged an early knockout loss to the murderous-punching Turkey Thompson by winning a one-sided 15-round decision. Along the way, he had also fought a draw with Maxim, and lost close decisions to top contender Jimmy Bivins and former light heavyweight champion Melio Bettina. Most of his fights had taken place in and around the Bay Area, where his popularity would eventually eclipse that of Actis, his boyhood hero.

"I was never really comfortable being so popular," said Valentino, who has been married to his second wife, Josie, for 25 years. "I guess that had a lot to do with the pain of my past. As a kid I never had any friends at all, so it was hard to make them as an adult. Popularity was a very awkward thing for me. People would want me to do appearances, and I would be too shy. I always believed inside that once I quit boxing, there wouldn't be any more celebrity."

Blind in one eye, Valentino retired for good after the Louis exhibition. He would eventually work for 22 years as a maitre d' at Scoma's, a landmark restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf where it seemed as if all anyone ever wanted to talk about was the Charles fight. Valentino never stopped being surprised at the interest he generated in diners, many of whom were tourists. Even more baffling to him than the fact that so many customers recognized him was how genuinely thrilled they were to meet him.

"In a sport that is rife with whores, pimps, and sleaze, Pat stands out as a truly honorable, proud man," said Pat Lawlor, a contemporary San Francisco blue-collar boxing hero who recently retired after a controversial, whirlwind career. "You can see the pride he has in himself just by looking at the way he carries himself and the tremendous physical condition he keeps himself in."

At 200 pounds, Valentino, an avid golfer and walker, still cuts a dashing, formidable figure. Yet he still seems somewhat surprised that boxing enabled him to develop an awkward confidence in himself. Even now he has a vivid recollection of his only two childhood friends' reaction when, at the age of 15, he boldly announced he was going to be a prize fighter.

"They laughed like hell," he explained. "You got to remember, I was so shy and awkward, my face used to burn up with a rash just by talking to people. So when I told them I would someday fight Joe Louis, who had just beaten James Braddock for the heavyweight championship, they laughed even louder. Well, I didn't get to fight Louis for the title, but I fought for the title and almost won. And I learned how to stand on my own two feet. Boxing made me a somebody, so I guess I have to say it did pretty good by me." ■

Robert Mladinich is a freelance writer based in New York City, and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Hasim Rahman KO 5 Lennox Lewis
(Wins WBC & IBF Titles)
Kirk Johnson KO 1 Derrick Banks
Tim Witherspoon KO 3 Danny Wofford
Lou Savarese KO 2 Marcus Rhode
Joe Mesi KO 4 Jorge Luis Gonzalez
Darroll Wilson KO 5 Mike Rouse
Razor Ruddock W 10 Harold Sconiers
Robert Daniels KO 1 Marvin Hunt
Rob Calloway KO 9 James Tillis
Richie Melito W Disq. 9 Damon Reed
Kali Meehan KO 4 Moses Kaviki
Tommy Martin KO 1 Tim Ray
Sergei Lyakhovich W 8 Sedreck Fields
Denis Bakhtov KO 8 Alexander Vassiliev
Otis Tisdale KO 2 Jimmy Garrett
Eric Kirkland KO 8 Willie Chapman
Paolo Vidoz KO 1 Bobby McGraw
Butterbean KO 2 Tyrone Muex

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Alexander Gurov KO 8 Torsten May
Jorge Castro W 10 Peter Venancio
Sebastian Rothmann KO 9 Mark Hobson
Turan Bagci KO 5 Radoslav Milionovic
Ernest Mateen W 8 John Scully
Jesper Kristiansen W 8 Dirk Wallyn
Michael Sims KO 1 Kevin Gilchrist

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Dariusz Michalczewski KO 9 Alejandro Lakatus
Silvio Branco KO 1 Didier Poujol
Jaffa Ballogou KO 2 Shannon Miller
Joseph Kiwanuka KO 2 Leon Gray
Melusi Khoza W 12 Patrick Madzinga
Jabrail Jabrailov KO 5 Renier Dorfling
George Jones KO 1 Darryl Hollowell
Elvir Muriqi W 8 Darren Whitley

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Joe Calzaghe KO 1 Mario Veit
Thomas Tate W 12 Fernando Zuniga
Markus Beyer KO 7 Manuel Lopez
Anthony Mundine KO 3 Timo Masua
Carmine Tufano W 10 Dan Sheehan
Lester Jacobs W 6 Leigh Wicks
Will McIntyre KO 2 Robert Doyle
Anthony Hanshaw KO 1 Bertrand Tchendjeu
Jerson Ravelo W 4 Manu Ntoh
Jerson Ravelo KO 1 Stacey Williams

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Bernard Hopkins W 12 Keith Holmes
(Retains IBF Title; Wins WBC Title)
Fernando Vargas KO 6 Wilfredo Rivera
Howard Eastman KO 10 Robert McCracken
Dwain Williams KO 2 Rito Ruvalcaba
Robert Allen W 8 Fermin Cherino
Raymond Joval KO 8 Roberto Martins
Kenny Ellis KO 3 Tim Shocks
Gary Lockett KO 2 Howard Clarke
Jameel Wilson KO 2 Carlton Ray Holland
R.J. Karsten W 6 Karim Hassine

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Bronco McKart W 10 Michael Lerma
J.C. Candelo W 10 Kevin Tillman

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Alex Trujillo clocks Emmanuel Clottey with a left hook

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Junior Jones returns to action and outpoints Manuel Sepeda

Shibata Flores KO 5 Rene Herrera
Carlos Bojorquez KO 4 Pernell Whitaker
Carlos Baldomir KO 1 Alex Carrillo
Nader Hamdan KO 1 Chalermphol Sakapanya
Kassim Ouma Tech. Draw 2 James Coker
Ron Weaver KO 6 Bryon Mackie
John Molnar KO 3 Kevin Collins
Sherwin Davis KO 3 Dante Craig

WELTERWEIGHTS

Andrew Lewis W 12 Larry Marks
(Retains WBA Title)
Hector Camacho Jr. KO 2 Larry LaCoursiere
Hector Quiroz KO 2 Javier Valadez
Alessandro Duran KO 9 Maxim Nesterenko
Danny Perez KO 4 Juan Rodriguez
Neil Sinclair KO 2 Zoltan Szili
Peter Malinga KO 4 Ashley Whiteboy
Ebo Elder KO 6 Jerry Smith
Ross Minter KO 3 Trevor Smith
Muhammad Abdulaev KO 1 Luis Pantera Ruiz

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Terronn Millett KO 1 Mickle Orr
Alex Trujillo KO 7 Emmanuel Clottey
Saul Duran KO 1 Pablo Garcia
Jorge Paez W 10 Verdell Smith
Steven Smith W 12 Zoltan Kalocsai
Stephen Carr KO 2 Darryl Sukerow
Manard Reed W 12 Chad Greenleaf
Eleazar Contreras KO 8 Fernando Mena
Suleiman M'Bayo W 10 Nordine Mouchi
Mikhail Krivolapov KO 7 Harrison Methula
Fred Cadena KO 4 Abel Pedroza
Larry Mosley W 6 Gabriel Holguin
Demetrius Hopkins KO 2 Lenny Williams
Oscar Diaz KO 2 Juan Montes Deoca
Ricardo Williams Jr. No-Contest 3
Damian Guerra

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Juan Lazcano KO 11 John-John Molina
Julio Diaz KO 9 Justo Sencion
Ernesto Zepeda KO 5 Justin Juuko
Julian Wheeler W 8 Israel Cardona
Bobby Vanzie KO 7 Steve Murray
Bradley Pryce W 12 Jason Hall
Alfred Kotey KO 6 Anthony Maynard
Brian Adams W 10 Calvin Davis
Martin Jacobs W 12 Barend van Rooyen
Bernard Harris W 8 Scott Buck
Richard Evatt W 4 Rakhim Mingaleev
Gary Balleto W 6 Freddy Cruz
Miguel Cotto W 4 Waklimi Young
Francisco Bojado KO 1 Mario Lacey
Francisco Bojado KO 3 David Montes

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Joel Casamayor W 12 Edwin Santana
(Retains WBA Title)
John Brown KO 4 Carlos Rocha
Alejandro Gonzalez Tech. Draw 10
Antonio Ramirez
Juan Arias KO 3 Antonio Ramirez
Junior Jones W 10 Manuel Sepeda
Daniel Attah W 10 Ariel Nistal
Boris Sinitsin KO 4 Anton Vontszemu
Patrick Mullings KO 3 Alexander Tiranov
Kengo Nagashima W 10
Tetsuya Shinozaki
Alex Arthur W 4 Dafydd Carlin

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Manuel Medina KO 4 Mike Juarez
Chelo Diaz W 10 Max Gomez
Kozo Ishii KO 2 Kiet Chaiyong
Steve Trumble KO 1 Aristead Clayton
Lewis Wood Tech. Win 5 Jorge Luis Lopez
Frankie Archuleta KO 1 Russell Mosley
Gavin Rees KO 4 Vladimir Borov
Jason Pires KO 3 Luis Rivera

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Lehlo Ledwaba W 12 Carlos Contreras
(Retains IBF Title)
Manny Pacquiao KO 6
Wethya Sakmuangklang
Angel Chacon Tech. Draw 3
Eddie Saenz
Noel Wilders KO 6 Stevie Quinn
Osamu Sato W 12 Yongin Cho
Alexander Mahmutov KO 1
Alexander Lopukhovsky
Randy Suico KO 2
Khumphoon Eausamphan
Nedal Hussein W 6 Joe Morales
Emmanuel Lucero KO 3 Alvin Brown

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Genaro Garcia W 12 Ivan Alvarez
Rafael Marquez KO 3 Jovi Chan Halog
Jess Maca W 12 Masayuki Arinaga

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Gerry Penalosa KO 1 Keiji Yamaguchi
Hidenobu Honda KO 2 Chainarong Eminent
Vernie Torres KO 7 Neddy Garcia
Alex Sanchez KO 2 Melquiades Ventura
Dimitry Kirilov W 10 Janver Halog
Mzi Dintsi W 12 Abie Mnisi
Pedro Alcazar KO 4 Alex Saavedra
Ricardo Vargas KO 4 Juan Carlos Moreno
Takuya Kiya KO 5 Yoshiaki Matsukura
Jose Navarro W 4 Manuel Noyola

FLYWEIGHTS

Zolani Petelo W 8 Roberto Gomez
David Guerault KO 1 Gheorge Oprea
Hussein Hussein W 6 Sandro Oviedo

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Nelson Dieppa KO 11 Andy Tabanas
Hiroshi Nakajima KO 3 Wanchai Sriprachan
Juanito Rubillar KO 6
Fahsang Pow Pongsawang

STRAWWEIGHTS

Chana Porpaoin W 12 Keitaro Hoshino
(Regains WBA Title)
Roberto Leyva W 12 Daniel Reyes
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Joma Gamboa KO 5 Pigmy Muangchaiya
Noel Arambulet KO 2 Ever Paz
Ernesto Rubillar KO 4
Somthawin Singwangcha
Victor Burgos W 12 Victor Hernandez

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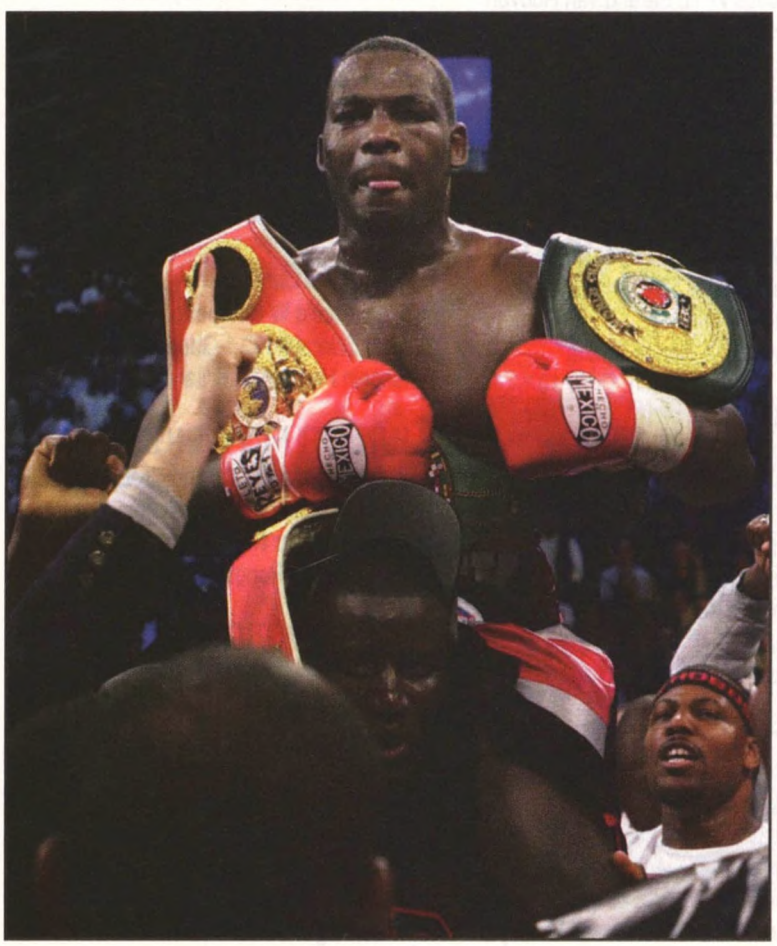
The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

After Marco Antonio Barrera whipped Prince Naseem Hamed on April 7, he seemed a lock to be named Fighter of the Month. He'd scored the biggest victory of his career, winning nearly every round against an undefeated fighter rated among the best in the sport, pound-for-pound. He had the perfect game plan and he followed it flawlessly, leaving no doubt about who the world's best featherweight is. It sure seemed like enough to guarantee his picture would be on this page.

But in boxing, the more certain something looks, the less certain it probably is. Lennox Lewis was sure to beat Hasim Rahman in South Africa. A lot of people figured he'd knock "The Rock" out within two or three rounds, in fact. Lewis obviously was one of those people, hence his reluctance to train his hardest.



But Rahman wasn't one of those people. He predicted he would knock Lewis out, and that's just what he did, landing a right hand for the ages in round five, laying Lewis out and earning the world heavyweight title. That punch denied Lewis his megafight with Mike Tyson, and it denied Barrera his third Fighter of the Month award. In any other month, it would have been yours, Marco. But this month belonged to The Rock.

• • • •

Hasim Rahman

RINGSIDE REPORTS

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Toledo absorbs a right hand before taking the title from Botile

Frankie Toledo W 12 Mbulelo Botile

Las Vegas, Nevada: The most vivid moment of an intriguing but far from exciting bout came at the postfight press conference, when deposed IBF featherweight champion Botile was so overcome with emotion that he was unable to speak with the media. The thing most everybody wanted to know was whether or not Botile's curiously docile performance had anything to do with the fact that in his previous bout, opponent Paul Ingle, from whom he won the title, had suffered a career-ending brain injury. But the answer will have to wait until another day, because the best the 28-year-old South African could do was rest his head on his forearms and weep.

For Toledo, a speedy 30-year-old southpaw from Paterson, New Jersey, the victory was the culmination of an up-and-down career fought mainly in small clubs for short money. He made the best of his big chance, employing a slashing, hit-and-run style that seldom found him motionless. And even though Toledo, 40-5-1 (15), ended the fight with his face covered with an assortment of cuts and abrasions, there was little doubt that he deserved the verdict, though certainly not by the generous margins of American judges Robert Byrd (119-109), Dave Moretti (118-110), and Pat Russell (117-111). THE RING also scored it for Toledo, but by a closer 116-112 tally.

Toledo, 126, controlled the first two rounds with his right-hand jab and movement before Botile, 125¾, finally got untracked in the third and began to connect with his own right. Although Toledo's backpedaling style continued to give Botile difficulty, he seemed to find the key to slowing down his challenger in the fifth, when he delivered several painful-looking rights to the body. But Toledo, intelligently switching the direction of his retreat several times per round, flurried back late in the session, and swept the next two rounds on all cards.

The mysteriously listless Botile, 27-2 (16), cut Toledo's right eye in the eighth and opened the ninth with a decent barrage, but could not maintain his momentum. He showed no sense of urgency down the stretch, throwing precious few punches the last three rounds. Toledo, meanwhile, buzzed around the ring as if he was on a motor scooter, stopping every now and then to unload a rapid-fire flurry, much to the pleasure of the near-capacity crowd at the Texas Station casino, which, by that point, had been won over to the underdog's cause. With 30 seconds remaining in the 12th round, Toledo raised his arms, confident that the belt would soon be his.

"It's difficult to get into somebody's mind, but this wasn't the Botile I know," said the ex-champ's trainer, Mzi Mnguni. "But we'll find out what the problem is, and we'll be back."

"I'm in shock," said an exhilarated Toledo. "I just wanna go home and celebrate."

The referee was Kenny Bayless (USA).
Television: ESPN2
Promoter: Cedric Kushner Promotions
(4-6-01)
Nigel Collins

Sven Ottke KO 8 James Crawford

Magdeburg, Germany: Despite not entering the professional ranks until he was almost 30, Ottke, 167¾, is becoming one of the great success stories of German boxing. True, he may not be the best fighter ever to come out of Deutschland, but he is an accomplished practitioner who can boast victories over the likes of Charles Brewer and Thomas Tate and was handy enough to impart a harsh lesson to his limited American opponent, Crawford, 167¼, at the Borderland Hall.

More than 8,000 people witnessed Ottke's ninth defense of the IBF super middleweight title. The arena was sold out within five days of tickets going on sale, and the capacity crowd was not disappointed.

Aware that Crawford, Grinnell, Iowa, offered not a hint of danger, Ottke, 33, fought more aggressively than normal. This was only the third stoppage victory of his career, a clear indication of the confidence he had to go after the American from the outset. After six rounds, Crawford had connected with only seven of 165 blows he threw at the champion, punches he fired more in desperation than any organized attempt to achieve an upset result. Ottke, 22-0 (3), landed 81 of 182 punches to that point, and for Crawford it would not get any better.

A succession of left-right combinations to the 31-year-old challenger's head caused him major disorientation, and a final

hard right to the midsection sent him down in the eighth round. Referee Robert Byrd (USA) completed the formality of the 10-count at 2:52 of the round with Crawford, 33-3-2 (14) with 1 no-decision, crawling on his hands and knees in a vain effort to rise.

Ottke, watched by 5.3 million viewers on German TV channel ARD, will defend his title next in Nuremburg on July 9 before meeting mandatory challenger James Butler in an effort to equal Henry Maske's all-time German record of 11 world title defenses.

Promoter: Wilfried Sauerland

(3-24-01)

Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Dianzo catches bantam champ Ayala with a right

Paulie Ayala W 12 Hugo Dianzo

Fort Worth, Texas: Defending WBA bantamweight champion Ayala was outboxed. He was outhustled. He was outlanded. He was even knocked down. Yet somehow, the judges at the Fort Worth Convention Center felt that the hometown guy, who just happened to have a career-high payday against Bones Adams waiting for him on the other side of this tuneup, had done enough to beat little-known Mexican Dianzo. It wasn't quite a verdict that boggled the mind, since many of the rounds were close, but it was hard to stomach the fact that Ayala, making his third defense of the title, got the benefit of the doubt from all three officials in virtually every close round.

The CompuBox numbers—Dianzo landed 43 more punches than Ayala and threw 465 more—seemed to tell the story, but the numbers that mattered most told a different one. Judge Gayle Van Hoy (USA) scored it 115-112, while Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico) and Anibal Miramontes (USA) both had it 115-113, all for Ayala, 32-1 (12). THE RING saw it 116-113 for Dianzo, 26-6-1 (14).

Ayala, 118, looked sluggish from the outset, and if he wasn't behind already, he certainly fell behind in the fourth round. The 29-year-old champion tried to increase his aggressiveness, but Dianzo, 118, repeatedly caught him coming in with right hands, one of which caused Ayala to lose his balance and stumble to the canvas with 10 seconds to go in the round.

Late in the fifth, the southpaw Ayala started to come on with a succession of right hooks to the jaw, but Dianzo, 26, outworked him in the sixth and froze the champion momentarily with a well-placed straight right hand. Dianzo remained the busier fighter in the seventh, but Ayala took the round with his more effective punches, many of which were aimed at the Mexican's body. Ayala also had a good round in the ninth, backing Dianzo up most of the time, but the challenger slugged on even terms with Ayala when he had to and seemed to be a few points ahead entering the final round.

As it turned out, though, he wasn't, and Ayala's lack of desperation in the final three minutes wasn't the miscalculation it appeared to be. Dianzo collapsed to the canvas in triumph when the final bell rang, and again in tears when the verdict was announced.

The referee was Laurence Cole (USA).

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Top Rank

(3-30-01)

Lehlo Ledwaba W 12 Carlos Contreras

Johannesburg, South Africa: They had little trouble in South Africa in naming "Hands Of Stone" Ledwaba their Fighter of the Year for 2000. The 29-year-old from Soweto has terrifically fast hands, the dexterity to put punches together in damaging combinations, and the physical strength to inflict pain with disturbing ease to the head and body of most of his opponents. But on the undercard of Hasim Rahman-Lennox Lewis at Carnival City, he was made to fight almost the entire way by Mexican challenger Contreras, 121, a Latino fighter straight from the classic mold.

Hard and strong and intent on taking the fight to the champion, Contreras, 17-5-2 (12), made new fans with his resolute challenge of a fine boxer. Ledwaba, 122, may have been the classier pugilist, but he had to gut it out against a man whose ambition burned bright even in the eye of a storm so forceful it would have overwhelmed most other challengers for the IBF junior featherweight belt.

A left hook early by the champion, making his fifth

defense, demonstrated his intent. Forcing a devastating climax was what he was about. A six-punch burst midway through the first round underlined his desire to look good in front of his supporters, and he made Contreras miss with everything he threw in the opening round. But the Mexican fought back hard and was given further encouragement when Ledwaba hurt his right hand during the fourth round, reducing its effectiveness for the remainder of the bout.

The fifth was a good round for the challenger, who drew Ledwaba, 33-1-1 (22), into close-quarter combat that increased Contreras' chances of pulling off the kind of shock Rahman did less than an hour later. But Ledwaba showed there is guts behind his guile. He fought hard, too, firing clusters of punches on the inside and retaining his poise at long range to land telling shots like the strong right he landed in the middle of the seventh round.

The 25-year-old challenger was in danger of being overwhelmed early in the ninth, but referee Sam Williams (USA) gave him time out to repair loose bandaging on his left glove, and the break gave him the second wind he sorely needed. He took a pounding again in the 10th, but a good long right and a couple of strong combinations claimed the 11th round for the Mexican, to his great credit. Ledwaba took the last, but knew for sure he had been in a fight.

Larry Hazzard Jr. (USA) scored it 118-110, Roy Francis (England) had it 117-112, and Stanley Christoudoulou (South Africa) saw it 116-112, all in favor of Ledwaba. THE RING also scored for Ledwaba, 118-112.

Promoters: Golden Gloves, Lion Promotions, and Main Events in association with Cedric Kushner Promotions

(4-22-01)

Brian Doogan

Omar Sheika KO 2 Stephane Ouellet

Las Vegas, Nevada: Hard-hitting super middleweight Sheika made the best of his showcase spot on the Marco Antonio Barrera-Naseem Hamed card, obliterating Quebec's Ouellet with a savage second-round knockout at the MGM Grand.

Ouellet, 167, enjoyed a good opening round, out-jabbing Sheika and avoiding most of the powershots hurled in his direction. But a fired-up Sheika, who is rebuilding after a loss to Joe Calzaghe last year, opened up in the second with the kind of bombs that have made him a fan favorite. With just over a minute elapsed in the second, the Paterson, New Jersey, resident drilled the French-Canadian flush with a vicious right-left-right combination to the head.

Ouellet, 29, went down hard, yet somehow staggered to his feet just inside of referee Tony Weeks' count. But when the groggy fighter wobbled slightly, Weeks terminated the bout at the 1:46 mark. Ouellet, 29-4 (18), protested mildly, but there was no way he was going to stand up to Shieka's heavy artillery for much longer.

The elated Sheika, also 167, soon began campaigning for a fight with Dana Rosenblatt, who was originally scheduled to be on the show, but pulled out with an injury.

"I've been trying to meet Rosenblatt for over a year, and all I hear are excuses," said the 23-year-old Sheika, after raising his record to 22-2 (15). "I wish he'd stop being a coward and fight me."

Television: TVKO

Promoters: Prince Promotions, Let's Get It On Promotions

(4-7-01)

Nigel Collins

Chana Porpaoin W 12 Keitaro Hoshino

Yokohama, Japan: Slick-punching ex-champ Porpaoin, 105, Thailand, surprisingly regained the WBA minimumweight throne more than five years after surrendering it, as he outpunched the nervous and stiff champ Hoshino, 105, Japan, to win a split decision over 12 rounds.

Hoshino, making his first defense since dethroning Filipino Joma Gamboa last December, got off to a good start in the opening canto, but the 35-year-old Thailander took the initiative thereafter with his light but busy combinations. Hoshino, 31, occasionally scored with heavier punches, but the challenger kept punching and moving well to pile up points steadily.

Judges Duane Ford (USA) and Oscar Perez (USA) both scored it 115-113 for Porpaoin, 44-1-2 (16), while Wansoo Yuh (Korea) had it a ridiculous 118-110 for Hoshino, 21-7 (5).

Promoter: Hanagata Promotions in association with Teiken Promotions

(4-16-01)

Joe Koizumi ■

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE

Sheika's hook was a real head-turner

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Hasim Rahman

(Continued from page 32)

back, so I rented a couple of cars. But they called me from the airport. I wanted to go home and sleep, but they'd been waiting for me for hours, so I told everybody to meet me at Hobo's sporting goods store—one of my sponsors. The mayor came down, and all the news reporters. It was a real hero's welcome.

The Ring: That must have made you feel good.

HR: Yeah, because I did this for us. There's something about Maryland this year, we're doing so good. The Maryland Terrapins made the Final Four. We've got our first heavyweight champion. The Ravens won the Super Bowl. And nobody gave any of us a chance.

The Ring: Do you want Mike Tyson next?

HR: Definitely. I feel like Mike Tyson is the guy that can make legitimate everything I did in South Africa. I believe there are still going to be a lot of naysayers. Tyson is the type of name that brings even more credibility. If I follow up beating Lewis by beating Tyson, then I can call it a career or do whatever I want at that point.

The Ring: Do you have any obligations to fight for HBO?

HR: No, I'm a free agent.

The Ring: So if you want to fight Tyson on SET, you can.

HR: I can fight Mike Tyson on whatever network I want.

The Ring: Would you go into a Tyson fight as confident as you went into the Lewis fight?

HR: I believe I'll be even more confident. I believe a shorter guy plays more into the hands of a guy like me. I think I have an easier time with shorter guys than I do with taller guys. For one, I don't think I can miss them. I believe I can hit shorter guys with regularity. As strong as my jab is, it's a weapon. It's not just a jab to set up punches. On top of that, it hurts you, and I can keep guys pretty much in check with it. And with the condition I'll be in, God willing, and the preparation mentally will enable my mind to stay focused on the task at hand. And I believe I can out-think Mike Tyson in the ring.

The Ring: Any predictions?

PHOTO BY PAUL DRINKWATER/NBC

You know you've hit the big time when you're a guest on* The Tonight Show With Jay Leno. *Less than a week after flattening Lennox Lewis, The Rock flew to California and wowed both Leno and the studio audience with his congenial personality.

HR: I believe this man will get dirty at some point, and rather than get knocked out, he'll get himself disqualified. That's how I envision it.

The Ring: Do you think you might be able to knock him out before he gets disqualified?

HR: When Mike gets confused or frustrated or things don't go his way, he immediately turns to dirty tactics.

The Ring: If Tyson gets dirty, are you going to look to the referee for help, or are you going to take care of it yourself?

HR: If you noticed in the Lewis fight, everything he did, I did back. When he feigned he was going to throw a big right hand, I did it right back. When he patted me on the head, which I hate, the next chance I got, I rubbed him on his head. I don't want anybody to get any edge whatsoever over me. Depending on how dirty he goes, I may have to answer back. I grew up not letting anybody do anything to me, and I'm not going to start now. I'm not going to instigate any of this stuff, but I'll definitely respond to anything anybody does to me. But if he gets dirty to the point where he's making a mockery of the game, I'm not going to stoop to his level. I'd just as soon let the referee deal with it. I believe we would be cheating the fans if we turned it into a foulfest.

The Ring: Do you see a long reign for yourself?

HR: It will depend on how I feel. I'm not in love with boxing to the point where ... Let me put it this way, if I'm in the position where Evander Holyfield is, I'm walking away from the game. Boxing was a chance for me to earn the income to do things for my Muslim community and my family. And I believe that in my next fight I will hit that mark.

The Ring: The lure of more money won't necessarily keep you fighting.

HR: I'm not the sort to live a lifestyle like I'm going to keep making this kind of money every year. I'm content to have things the way they've been. I don't need a $3- or $4-million house. I'm perfectly content to stay in a nice house in a nice neighborhood. I don't have to keep up with the Joneses and just because this guy has a Bentley, I have to have a Bentley. I wouldn't spend a quarter of a million dollars on a car.

The Ring: It's not always the money. Some fighters hate to step out of the spotlight.

HR: I don't have a problem with that. I don't like the spotlight. I accept the responsibility of being the heavyweight champion, of being a role model to the youth and community and the world. I don't want to represent this thing in a negative way. I feel like it's an honor, and if I say I'm going to do something, I'm a stand-up guy, I'm gonna do it. ■

The RING

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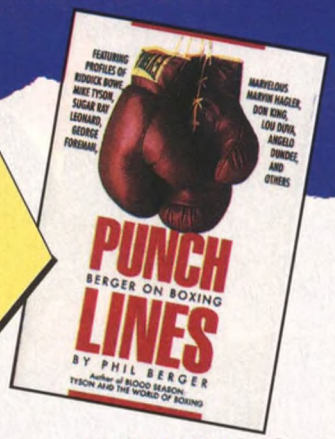

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New Face

(Continued from page 16)

ness. I guess I've fought a lot, so I don't get nervous before fights. It doesn't really bother me."

That calm makes it hard to believe the featherweight from San Bernardino, California, is only 20 years old. But given Velardez' tough upbringing, it's not hard to see where that relaxed demeanor comes from.

Armando Velardez raised six children by himself after his wife died in 1992 of a tumor at the base of her brain that rendered Charlene terminally ill at 31. It was a grueling process for the family to witness. Armando Jr. and Bobby Boy, then 11, were involved in the everyday care of their mother, medicating her and feeding her liquid food.

Charlene was fighting for her life after undergoing two brain surgeries and chemotherapy. Her family endured as they watched her wither from 130 pounds to 95 pounds.

Through it all, Armando Sr. remained a strong force for his family to lean on. Right up to her death, Charlene had concerns she was placing too great a burden on her husband. Armando, however, promised her the family would remain intact. It has.

Armando's example during that trying time would later have a positive effect on his children.

"It made me strong emotionally," Bobby Boy said. "Not too much phases me as an adult, and I think that comes from my father. I was too young to understand what was going on with my mom. It didn't hit me like it did my brother, Armando. I still carry that time around with me, though. We all did things to help my mother. Sometimes, when I look out at the crowd before my fights, it's like I can see her in the crowd, like she's still around."

Velardez never goes by the name Fernando. It's been Bobby Boy ever since he was in the crib. Armando Jr. used to come scampering on his little legs to inform his parents that "Bobby is crying, Bobby is crying," because he was too young to pronounce the word "baby." The name "Bobby" stuck.

Just like Bobby Boy himself has in the ring despite an unsuccessful start to his

career. He was 0-1-1 after his first two fights and 2-2-1 after five fights, hardly the record of a budding contender. But Velardez avenged three of his five career setbacks. The four-round draw to Armando Contreras in Bobby Boy's pro debut was repaid two-fold, with five- and 10-round decisions over Contreras. After suffering a second-round knockout to Edward Utorov in his second pro bout, Bobby Boy avenged that with a six-round decision in his ninth fight. And the four-round decision loss to Edwin Zarate in his fifth fight was reversed with a four-round victory in his 14th fight.

"Fernando has what I call moxie," said Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler. "He has a zest for fighting. He's far from a finished product, but for a kid his age, he shows me a maturity in the ring beyond his years. He goes into the ring with no fear, no concern. He's not in awe of his opponent or his surroundings. He showed me those things in that Ramirez fight. He was a pretty big underdog in that fight and he could have cared less. A lot of that is a tribute to his personality and fighting heart."

Top Rank has expressed an interest in signing Bobby Boy, and America Presents has used him a number of times on its shows.

"Fernando has balls down to his ankles," America Presents matchmaker Tom Brown said. "He's just a tough, tough kid. He doesn't have a great punch or great skills, but every time, you know the kid is going to give you a good fight. He's so young, so I can't really say if he's championship caliber yet, but based on his win over Juan Carlos Ramirez, he's certainly going in the right direction."

What has fascinated Brown lately is how Bobby Boy is willing to trade punches inside despite lacking a knockout punch. He fights like someone who has more power than he actually has.

Boxing isn't Velardez' only priority; another important one is his education. Armando Sr. has been going back-and-forth with the San Bernardino School District about Bobby Boy's high school transcripts, sure that his son had fulfilled all of his academic requirements. According to the school district, however, Velardez had not, which has prompted him to return to school and work toward achieving his high school diploma. He is expected to graduate this June.

Velardez' biggest victory so far has come outside of the ring, when he won a custody battle for his two-year-old daughter, Delores. She is the most important thing in the fighter's young life right now.

"I love my daughter," Velardez said. "I buy her things, do things for her. I take care of my daughter, and my family helps me take care of her a lot. Getting custody is something I wanted to do and something I felt I had to do."

Just like one day driving down Waterman Avenue and seeing his mother's stone angel jutting up from among the other monuments. ■

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Bobby Boy swarms all over favored Juan Carlos Ramirez

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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of March 2001, the WBC as of April 2001 and the IBF as of March 2001.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Hasim Rahman (USA)	**C**	**–**	**4**
John Ruiz (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Lennox Lewis (GB)	**2**	**–**	**C**
Mike Tyson (USA)	1	5	12
Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)	3	6	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	4	–	9
Larry Donald (USA)	5	4	6
Lance Whitaker (USA)	6	10	10
David Tua (NZ)	7	7	5
Fres Oquendo (USA)	8	–	–
Henry Akinwande (GB)	9	8	–
Vaughn Bean (USA)	10	12	–
Vacant	–	1	1
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	2	–
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	3	–
David Izon (NIG)	12	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Danell Nicholson (USA)	23	–	3
Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)	–	–	7
Chris Byrd (USA)	–	–	8

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Virgil Hill (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	1	6	7
Louis Azille (DR)	2	5	8
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	3	–	–
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	4	–	12
Dale Brown (CAN)	5	–	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	6	8	3
Ezra Sellars (USA)	7	–	9
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	8	4	–
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	9	7	–
James Toney (USA)	10	3	5
Vacant	–	1	1
Jean Mark Mormeck (FRA)	–	2	–
Carl Thompson (GB)	12	9	4
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	–	10	–
Torsten May (GER)	–	11	2
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	–	6
Jorge Castro (ARG)	–	–	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	**C**	**C**	**C**
Clinton Woods (GB)	1	4	7
Yawe Davis (ITA)	2	–	–
Michael Nunn (USA)	3	–	–
Jean-Marc Mormerck (FRA)	4	–	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	5	6	5
Thomas Ulrich (GER)	6	8	–
Eric Harding (USA)	7	–	3
Julio Gonzalez (USA)	8	5	–
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	9	3	1
Antonio Tarver (USA)	10	12	6
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	1	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	–	2	–
Robert Koon (USA)	19	7	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	9	–
Richard Hall (USA)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Will Taylor (USA)	29	–	4
Graciano Rocchigiani (ITA)	–	–	8
Lincoln Carter (USA)	13	–	9
David Telesco (USA)	–	–	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Vacant	**C**	**1**	**2**
Byron Mitchell (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Sven Ottke (GER)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Eric Lucas (CAN)	1	–	–
Dingaan Thobela (SA)	2	–	–
Glenn Catley (GB)	3	–	–
Markus Beyer (GER)	4	–	11
Mads Larsen (DEN)	5	6	–
Mario Velt (GER)	6	4	7
Omar Sheika (USA)	7	–	8
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	8	2	6
David Starie (GB)	9	7	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	10	–	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	17	3	–
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	5	–
Charles Brewer (USA)	18	8	4
Thomas Tate (USA)	14	9	3
Richie Woodhall (GB)	–	10	–
James Butler (USA)	15	–	1
Danilo Haussler (GER)	11	–	5
Freemon Barr (USA)	–	–	9
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	12	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	**C**	**–**	**C**
William Joppy (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Erland Betare (FRA)	1	–	–
David Reid (USA)	2	2	3
Howard Eastman (GB)	3	1	4
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	4	–	12
Tito Mendoza (PAN)	5	–	6
Keith Holmes (USA)	6	–	–
Kevin Palmer (USA)	7	–	–
Carl Daniels (USA)	8	6	1
Cristian Sanavia (ITA)	9	–	–
Nick Martinez (USA)	10	–	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	–	3	9
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	4	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	5	–
Ryan Rhodes (GB)	–	7	–
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	–	8	5
Mikkel Kessler (DEN)	–	9	–
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	7
Brian Barbosa (USA)	13	–	8
Armand Krajnc (SLV)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Felix Trinidad (PR)	**–**	**C**	**C**
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	1	5	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	2	2	3
Winky Wright (USA)	3	3	1
J.C. Candelo (COL)	4	10	10
Alfred Ankamah (GHA)	5	–	–
Quirino Garcia (MEX)	6	–	–
Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)	7	–	–
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	8	6	–
Travis Simms (USA)	9	–	–
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	10	–	–
Jose Flores (MEX)	12	1	5
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	4	–
Frank Olsen (DEN)	–	7	–
Michael Rask (DEN)	21	8	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	19	9	–
Robert Frazier (USA)	–	–	2
Bronco McKart (USA)	14	–	4
Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)	27	–	6
Ross Thompson (USA)	–	–	7
Alex Bunema (USA)	16	–	8
Michael Lerma (USA)	–	–	9

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Shane Mosley (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Vacant	**–**	**–**	**C**
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	1	–	–
Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)	2	–	–
Hector Camacho Jr. (USA)	3	–	–
Kofi Jantuah (GHA)	4	5	10
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	5	8	–
Danny Perez (USA)	6	9	–
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	7	2	8
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	8	–	12
Michele Piccirillo (ITA)	9	–	4
Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)	10	–	9
Ricardo Mayorga (CR)	–	1	–
Michael Trabant (GERE)	27	3	–
Chantel Stanciel (USA)	20	4	–
James Page (USA)	–	6	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	7	11
Frederic Klose (FRA)	22	10	–
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	1
Vernon Forrest (USA)	–	–	2
Oba Carr (USA)	19	–	3
Cory Spinks (USA)	13	–	5
Larry Marks (USA)	–	11	6
Frank Olsen (DEN)	–	–	7

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	**C**	**C**	**–**
Zab Judah (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Oktay Urkal (TUR)	1	4	6
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	2	2	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	3	–	–

Gianluca Branco (ITA)	4	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	5	–	–
Ray Oliveira (USA)	6	–	5
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	7	11	8
Ricky Quiles (USA)	8	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	9	5	–
Arturo Gatti (CAN)	10	–	–
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	–	1	3
Randall Bailey (USA)	20	3	7
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	6	–
John-John Molina (PR)	–	7	–
Ricky Hatton (GB)	12	8	11
Alex Trujillo (PR)	–	9	–
Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)	29	10	–
Allan Vester (DEN)	19	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Terronn Millett (USA)	–	–	4
Antonio Diaz (USA)	22	–	9
George Scott (SWE)	–	–	10

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)	C	–	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	–	C	–
Paul Spadafora (USA)	–	–	C
Steve Johnston (USA)	1	–	3
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	2	1	7
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	3	–	–
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	4	–	–
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	5	–	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	6	12	9
Diego Corrales (USA)	7	–	–
Juan Lazcano (USA)	8	–	6
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	9	5	–
Alex Trujillo (PR)	10	–	–
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	2	–
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	–	3	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	4	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	22	6	–
Miguel Callist (PAN)	–	7	–
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	–	8	–
Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)	27	9	8
Djamel Lifa (FRA)	20	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)	12	–	4
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	–	5
Billy Irwin (CAN)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	C	–	–
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	–	C	–
Steve Forbes (USA)	–	–	C
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	7	4
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	2	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	3	–	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	4	–	–
Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)	5	–	–
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	6	2	8
Philip Ndou (SA)	7	–	–
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	8	–	–
Affif Djelti (FRA)	9	–	–
Randy Suico (PHIL)	10	–	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	1	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	3	–
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	4	–
Luis Navarro (USA)	13	5	9
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	–	6	–
Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)	–	8	–
Koji Arisawa (JAP)	23	9	–
Michael Gomez (GB)	19	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
John Brown (USA)	–	–	2
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	3
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	–	5
David Santos (USA)	–	–	6
Juan Arias (USA)	–	–	7
Robert Garcia (USA)	–	12	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	C	–	–
Derrick Gainer (USA)	–	C	–
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	–	C
Injin Chi (KOR)	1	–	–
Guty Espadas (MEX)	2	–	–
Naseem Hamed (GB)	3	1	3
Johnny Tapia (USA)	4	–	–
Scott Harrison (GB)	5	–	–
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	6	–	–
Manuel Calvo (SPA)	7	–	–
Edgar Barcenas (MEX)	8	–	–
Augie Sanchez (USA)	9	–	6
Hector Velazquez (MEX)	10	–	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	–	2	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	3	7
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	4	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	5	–
Lewis Woods (US)	24	6	–
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	7	4
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	–	8	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	9	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	–	10	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	13	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	–	–	5
David Toledo (USA)	–	–	8
Panther Yanagida (JAP)	12	–	9
Carlos Navarro (USA)	–	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Willie Jorrin (USA)	C	–	–
Clarence Adams (USA)	–	C	–
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	–	–	C
Michael Brodie (GB)	1	–	11
Oscar Larios (MEX)	2	–	–
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	3	–	5
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	4	–	7
Osamu Sato (JAP)	5	9	–
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	6	5	6
Marcos Licona (USA)	7	–	–
Cesar Soto (MEX)	8	–	–
Agapito Sanchez (DR)	9	–	10
Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)	10	–	–
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	1	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	28	2	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	3	–
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	17	4	3
Danny Romero (USA)	–	6	–
Nestor Garza (MEX)	–	7	–
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	21	8	–
Johnny Armour (GB)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)	–	–	4
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	24	–	8
Hector Julia Avila (DR)	11	–	9

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	C	–	–
Paul Ayala (USA)	–	C	–
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Ricardo Barajas (MEX)	1	11	–
Genaro Garcia (USA)	2	10	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	3	2	4
Jess Maca (PHIL)	4	–	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	5	–	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	6	4	–
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	7	–	–
Diego Morales (MEX)	8	–	–
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	9	7	12
Jorge Lacierva (MEX)	10	–	–
Eidy Moya (VEN)	–	1	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	3	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	5	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	6	–
Johnny Tapia (USA)	–	8	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Pete Frissina (USA)	–	–	3
Danny Romero (USA)	–	–	5
Steve Dotse (GHA)	–	–	6
Juan Cordoba (ARG)	–	–	7
Jesus Perez (COL)	–	–	8
Arthur Johnson (USA)	–	–	9
Luigi Castiglione (ITA)	17	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	C	–	–
Setsuo Kobayashi (JAP)	–	C	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	–	–	C
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	–
In Joo Cho (KOR)	2	–	–
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	3	–	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	4	–	–
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	5	–	–
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	6	–	–
Vernie Torres (USA)	7	–	8
Pedro Alcazar (PAN)	8	–	10
Martin Castillo (MEX)	9	–	12
Luis Bolanos (COL)	10	11	5
Vacant	–	1	1
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	2	7
Alexander Munoz (VEN)	–	3	–
Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)	–	4	–
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	5	4
Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)	–	6	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	13	7	–
Diego Morales (MEX)	–	8	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	9	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Mauricio Pastrana (COL)	–	–	3
Adonis Rivas (NIC)	–	–	6
Yani Malhendo (JAP)	–	–	9

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	C	–	–
Eric Morel (USA)	–	C	–
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	C
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	1	9	12
Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)	2	–	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	3	4	5
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	4	8	6
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	5	–	–
Gerson Guerrero (MEX)	6	–	11
Hayato Asai (JAP)	7	–	–
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	8	–	–
Horacio Chicagual (ARG)	9	–	–
Randy Mangubat (PHIL)	10	–	–
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	1	–
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	2	–
Isidro Garcia (MEX)	–	3	–
Mzukisi Sikali (SA)	23	5	–
Panieng Okuda (THAI)	–	6	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	13	7	4
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Hawk Makepula (SA)	–	–	3
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	29	–	7
David Guerault (FRA)	17	–	8
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	9
Zoltan Lunka (TUR)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	C	–	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	C	–
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	–	–	C
Jorge Arce (MEX)	1	5	4
Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)	2	–	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	3	3	–
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	4	–	5
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	5	10	–
Jesus Martinez (MEX)	6	–	–
Takayuki Korogi (JAP)	7	–	–
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	8	7	7
Masibulele Makepula (SA)	9	12	–
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	10	2	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	1	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	–	4	–
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	–	6	–
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	21	8	–
Deeden Kengkarun (THAI)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	2
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	–	–	3
Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)	–	–	6
Juan Keb Baas (MEX)	–	–	8
Everardo Morales (MEX)	–	–	9
Gerson Guerrero (MEX)	–	–	10

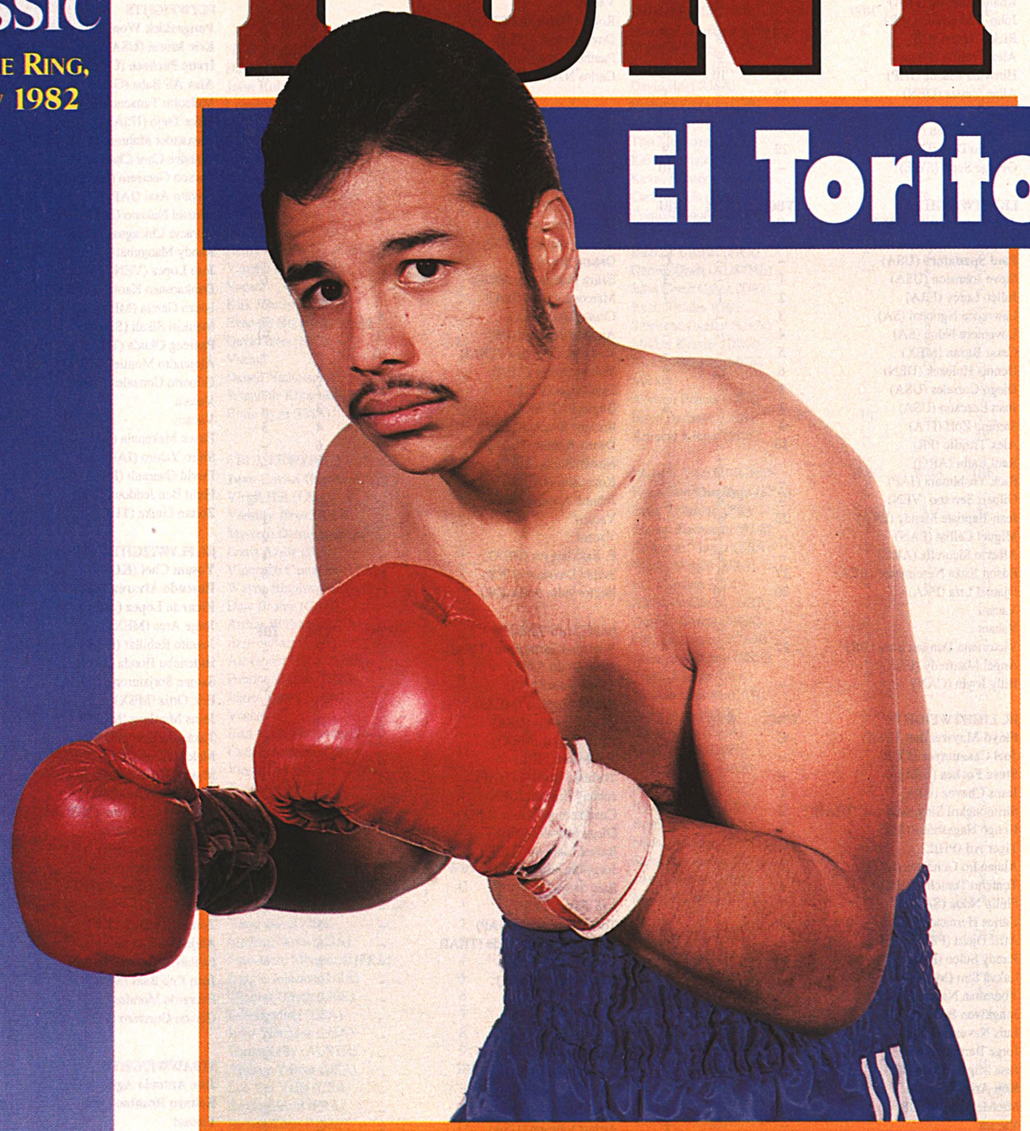
STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	C	–	–
Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)	6	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	1	–	–
Jaewon Kim (KOR)	2	–	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	3	–	–
Yutaka Niida (JAP)	4	11	–
Khulile Makeba (SA)	5	10	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	7	5	10
Erdene Chuluun (MON)	8	–	–
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	9	6	7
Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)	10	–	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	–	1	–
Noel Arambulet (VEN)	14	2	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	3	–
Daniel Reyes (COL)	–	4	1
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	–	7	9
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	8	–
Takayuki Korogi (JAP)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Kermin Guardia (COL)	–	–	3
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	–	–	4
Roberto Leyva (MEX)	–	–	5
Miguel Barrera (MEX)	16	–	6
Surachai Saengmorokot (THAI)	–	–	8

CLASSIC

From THE RING, January 1982

TONY AYALA

El Torito Is No Bull



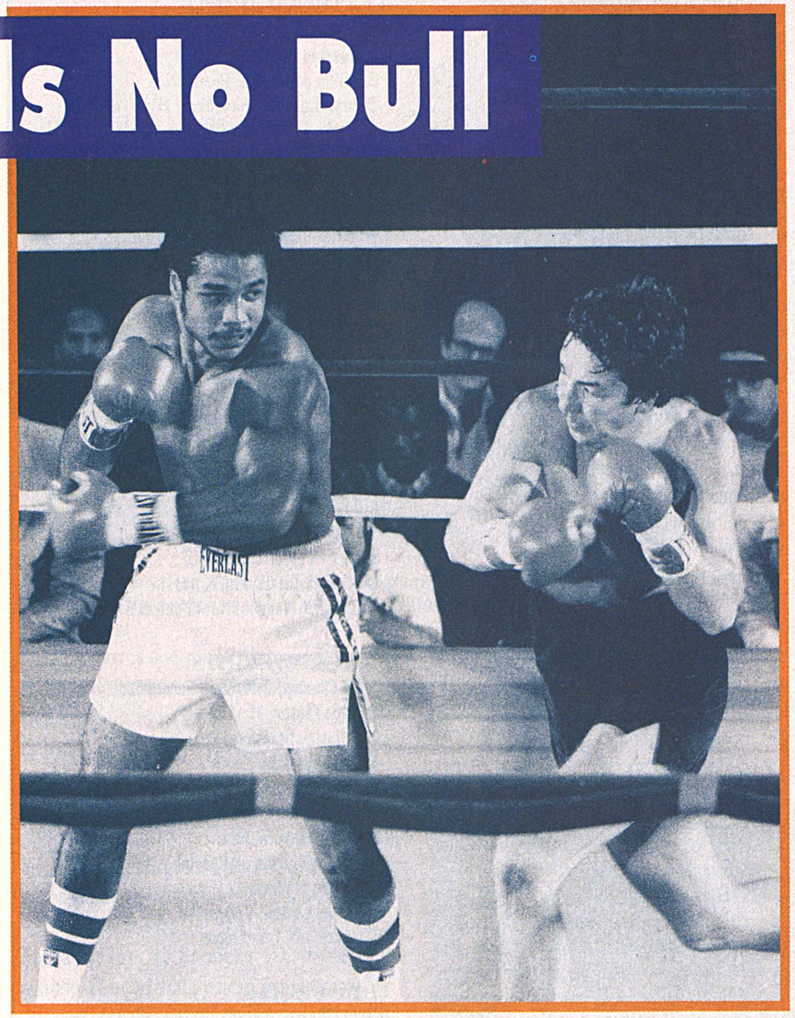
Only 18 years old, Tony Ayala Jr. liked working out in the gym. It gave "Torito" (baby bull), a sense of being one of the boys, as opposed to being a "million-dollar baby."

By Steve Marantz

"I like to be in the gym" said Tony Ayala, "because in the gym nobody treats me like a million-dollar baby. In the gym, I'm not Tony Ayala Jr., the great fighter making a lot of money. I'm just one of the boys. That's how I like to be treated."

Tony Ayala Jr. is 18 and he likes it. He will tell you it's hard being one of the boys when you fight like a man. He also will tell you he feels quite fortunate to be "Torito," the baby bull, the brightest young boxer since Ray Leonard.

"I hope you don't think I'm bragging," said Ayala, speaking and skipping rope, *ta-ta, ta-ta, ta-ta*. "But I feel confident and I'm glad God gave me the strength. If I hit anybody solid, I will knock them out. Leonard. Hearns. Hagler. I feel I'm gifted. I'm very strong. That's one of the things I thank God for."



The 5'8" Ayala, pictured vs. Mike Baker, liked to get in close and slug away against taller junior middleweights. Once inside, Ayala would use his short, thick arms to pound on an opponent's body.

He is training in the San Fernando Gym, a city facility financed and run by his father, Tony Sr., and he is the perfect host. He introduces visitors to his friends who also train here, and he makes sure reporters spell their names right. Ayala is at once gregarious and playful. "I don't hang around with boxers much," he said loudly. "They're too stupid."

"Tony puts on everybody," said Felix Castillo, a 21-year-old bantamweight.

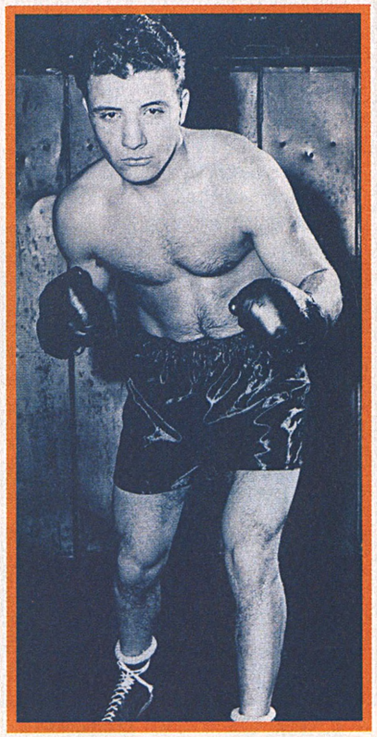
But when he steps into the ring, another part of his brain takes over. "I feel like King Kong," said Ayala. The fighter to whom he most often is compared is Jake LaMotta, a champion gorilla of 30 years ago.

Ayala's last fight did not allow him to display the best of his gorilla tendencies. On the undercard of the Leonard-Hearns fight in Las Vegas, he scored a first-round knockout of Jose Baquedano, a Mexican of fierce repute. Three left hooks laid out Baquedano before the audience had returned from the concession stands. People will learn about Ayala.

"Torito is the kind of a fighter you could put into any promotion and he will bring the people to their feet," said Tony Ayala Sr., who has trained his son since Tony Jr. was five.

He does his best fighting with his forehead planted on his opponent's chest, his thick arms pounding short, canny punches. At 5'8", Ayala does not have the range or the inclination to box with taller opponents in the junior middleweight class. He gets them to fight at his distance—close.

"I've faced a lot of cuties," said Ayala. "I call them cuties. I don't run after those guys. That's what I like about the pros. You can take your time. You can kill a round or two. If I don't run after a guy, he's gotta come to me."



Ayala's fighting style reminded many experts of another bull from another time, former middleweight champion Jake LaMotta. Like LaMotta, Ayala had a penchant for taking a few blows to deliver a few.

THE RING RATINGS, January 1982

Salvador Sanchez

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Larry Holmes, Easton, PA
1. **Mike Weaver**, Los Angeles, CA
2. **Gerry Cooney**, Huntington, NY
3. **Michael Dokes**, Akron, OH
4. **Greg Page**, Louisville, KY
5. **Gerrie Coetzee**, South Africa
6. **Leon Spinks**, St. Louis, MO
7. **Trevor Berbick**, Canada
8. **James (Quick) Tillis**, Chicago, IL
9. **Randall (Tex) Cobb**, Philadelphia, PA
10. **Renaldo Snipes**, Yonkers, NY

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Matthew Saad Muhammad, Philadelphia, PA
1. **Michael Spinks**, St. Louis, MO
2. **Eddie Mustafa Muhammad**, Brooklyn, NY
3. **Dwight Braxton**, Philadelphia, PA
4. **Jerry Martin**, Philadelphia, PA
5. **James Scott**, Rahway, NJ
6. **Carlos DeLeon**, Puerto Rico
7. **Marvin Camel**, Missoula, MT
8. **Murray Sutherland**, Bay City, MI
9. **Marvin Johnson**, Indianapolis, IN
10. **Jerry Celestine**, New Orleans, LA

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Marvin Hagler, Brockton, MA
1. **Dwight Davison**, Detroit, MI
2. **Mustafa Hamsho**, Syria
3. **Wilford Scypion**, New York, NY
4. **Frank Fletcher**, Philadelphia, PA
5. **Tony Sibson**, England
6. **Fulgencio Obelmejias**, Venezuela
7. **Curtis Parker**, Philadelphia, PA
8. **Ray Seales**, Tacoma, WA
9. **Robbie Epps**, Clovis, NM
10. **Vinnie Curto**, Boston, MA

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ray Leonard, Palmer Park, MD
1. **Wilfred Benitez**, Puerto Rico
2. **Ayub Kalule**, Uganda
3. **Maurice Hope**, England
4. **Tony Ayala Jr.**, San Antonio, TX
5. **Carlos Herrera**, Argentina
6. **Charlie Weir**, South Africa
7. **Roberto Duran**, Panama
8. **Walter Gomez**, Argentina
9. **Gary Guiden**, Indianapolis, IN
10. **Tidashi Mihara**, Japan

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ray Leonard, Palmer Park, MD
1. **Thomas Hearns**, Detroit, MI
2. **Roger Stafford**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Pipino Cuevas**, Mexico
4. **Roberto Duran**, Panama
5. **Randy Shields**, N. Hollywood, CA
6. **Bruce Finch**, Milwaukee, WI
7. **Milton McCrory**, Detroit, MI
8. **Adolfo Viruet**, Hoboken, NJ
9. **Colin Jones**, England
10. **Pete Ranzany**, Sacramento, CA

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Aaron Pryor, Cincinnati, OH
1. **Saoul Mamby**, New York, NY
2. **Jo Kimpuani**, France
3. **Dujuan Johnson**, Detroit, MI
4. **Miguel Montilla**, Dominican Republic
5. **Monroe Brooks**, Los Angeles, CA
6. **Johnny Bumphus**, Nashville, TN
7. **Lennox Blackmoore**, Guyana
8. **Willie Rodriguez**, Allentown, PA
9. **Leroy Haley**, Las Vegas, NV
10. **Steve Hearon**, Houston, TX

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Alexis Arguello, Nicaragua
1. **Aaron Pryor**, Cincinnati, OH
2. **Andy Ganigan**, Honolulu, HI
3. **Hilmer Kenty**, Detroit, MI
4. **Claude Noel**, Trinidad
5. **Howard Davis Jr.**, Glen Cove, NY
6. **Sean O'Grady**, Oklahoma City, OK
7. **Rodolfo (Gato) Gonzalez**, Mexico
8. **Roberto Elizondo**, Corpus Christi, TX
9. **Gonzallo Montellano**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Ray Mancini**, Youngstown, OH

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Samuel Serrano, Puerto Rico
1. **Rolando Navarrete**, Honolulu, HI
2. **Cornelius Boza-Edwards**, England
3. **Rafael (Bazooka) Limon**, Mexico
4. **Edwin Rosario**, Puerto Rico
5. **Bobby Chacon**, Pacoima, CA
6. **Yasutsune Uehara**, Japan
7. **Ildelfonso Bethelmy**, Venezuela
8. **Johnny Sato**, Stockton, CA
9. **John Verderosa**, Staten Island, NY
10. **Carlos Pinango**, Venezuela

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Salvador Sanchez, Mexico
1. **Eusebio Pedroza**, Panama
2. **Wilfredo Gomez**, Puerto Rico
3. **Juan LaPorte**, New York, NY
4. **Rocky Lockridge**, Paterson, NJ
5. **Edwin Rosario**, Puerto Rico
6. **Ruben Castillo**, Bakersfield, CA
7. **Patrick Ford**, Guyana
8. **Mario Miranda**, Colombia
9. **Pat Cowdell**, England
10. **Roberto Rubaldino**, Mexico

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Wilfredo Gomez, Puerto Rico
1. **Sergio Palma**, Argentina
2. **Mike Ayala**, New York, NY
3. **Leo Cruz**, Dominican Republic
4. **Ricardo Cardona**, Colombia
5. **Jaime Garza**, Los Angeles, CA
6. **Juan (Kid) Meza**, Los Angeles, CA
7. **Lupe Pintor**, Mexico
8. **Nicky Perez**, Tucson, AZ
9. **Soon-Hyun Chung**, Korea
10. **Carmelo Negron**, New York, NY

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jeff Chandler, Philadelphia, PA
1. **Lupe Pintor**, Mexico
2. **Julian Solis**, Puerto Rico
3. **Chul-Ho Kim**, Korea
4. **Albert Davila**, Los Angeles, CA
5. **Oscar Muniz**, Los Angeles, CA
6. **Eijiro Murata**, Japan
7. **Johnny Carter**, Philadelphia, PA
8. **Jose R. Narvez**, Argentina
9. **Rafael Orono**, Venezuela
10. **Hurricane Teru**, Japan

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Antonio Avelar, Mexico
1. **Hilario Zapata**, Panama
2. **Hwan Jin Kim**, Korea
3. **Betulio Gonzalez**, Venezuela
4. **Juan Herrera**, Mexico
5. **Gustavo Ballas**, Argentina
6. **Candido Tellez**, Mexico
7. **Luis Ibarra**, Panama
8. **Santos Laciar**, Argentina
9. **Willie Jensen**, Las Vegas, NV
10. **German Torres**, Mexico

Fighting as he does, Ayala is hit often, though not as often as he hits. In March, Mario Maldonado felled him with a winging right in the first round. Ayala climbed to his feet, signaled to his father, and went at Maldonado.

"It was a gamble on my part," said Ayala. "He could just as easily have knocked me down again as not." Ayala swarmed over his opponent, gave him little punching room, and took the fight in the third round.

The comparisons to LaMotta are no acci-

Coached by his father, Tony Sr., Torito began boxing at age five. Ayala's reputation sprouted when as an 11-year-old he battered a 19-year-old Mexican opponent.

dent. There is the pressuring, hammering style, and there are occasional late punches and low punches. Torito's fire burns in the ring, and if he has spit at one opponent he did not like, he has hugged some he likes.

"I'll go to any extent to win a fight," said Ayala. "I've hit guys after the bell, but I don't do it on purpose. The only guy I hit late on purpose was [Nicanor] Camacho, because he had me frustrated. It's not that I don't break; it just so happens when the bell sounds, I'm throwing a combination and I'm not gonna stop a shot. I don't care if the bell rings. If I'm throwing a shot, I'm gonna let it go all the way. In the instructions, it says to defend yourself at all times. When they get you in the middle of the ring, they're not paying you to come out and tap hands.

"I'm not a bad sport. It's before and during a fight I hate the guy's guts. But after the fight, hey, the guy is a fighter like me."

Ayala's personal story has a rich, passionate texture.

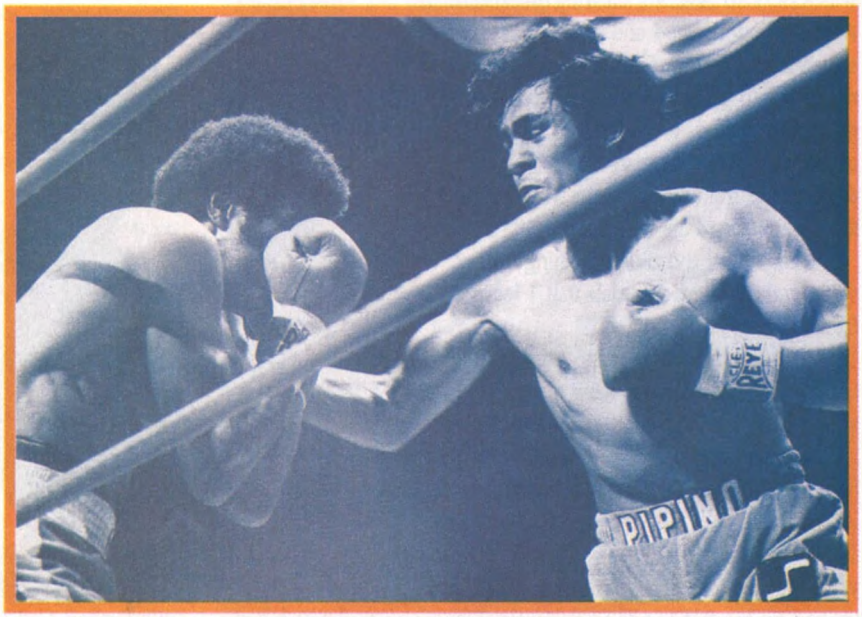
At the age of five, he began boxing, coached by his father and encouraged by his two older brothers, Mike and Sammy. Tony Sr., a mechanic at Kelly Air Force Base, and mother Pauline managed to keep their boys in boxing gloves and silk robes, but money was scarce. "We lived in a bad neighborhood," said Pauline, a short dynamo of a woman. "The boys learned to box so that bullies wouldn't bother them." Pablo, the youngest boy, also became a fighter.

Tony Sr. drove his boys hundreds of miles in an old station wagon to get them into tournaments. At age eight, Torito lost his last fight. Mike and Sammy won their share of trophies. "And when the boys weren't fighting their matches, they were fighting each other," said Pauline.

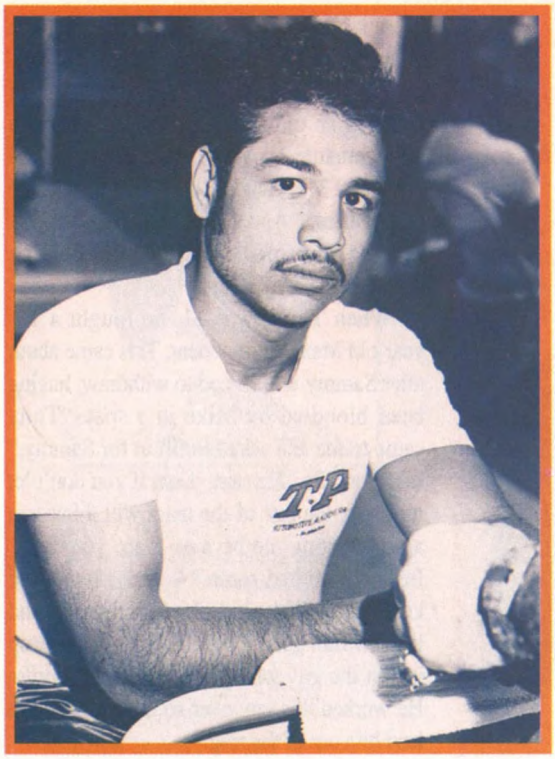
When Torito was 11, he fought a 19-year-old Mexican opponent. This came about after Sammy was forced to withdraw, having been bloodied by Mike in a spat. "Tony came to me and asked to fill in for Sammy," said Tony Sr. "He said, 'Dad, if you don't let me fight, the rest of the team will think you are protecting me because I am your son.' Because we had some 14- and 15-year-old kids fighting older kids, I let the fight go, and if I saw him getting hurt, I was going to stop it. But the guy who got hurt was not Torito. He worked this guy over so bad, they had to lead him out of the ring."

At 14, Torito got the better of then-welterweight champion Pipino Cuevas in a four-round workout that is legend in San Antonio. "Cuevas kept muttering, 'Incredible,' after it was over," said Joe Souza, a New Bedford, Massachusetts, native who is Ayala's assistant trainer.

In the ninth grade, Ayala dropped out of school—like Mike and Sammy before him—and became a full-time boxer. "School was too boring," he said. "It did not challenge me." Outside the gym, he souped up cars and



When he was 14, Ayala sparred four rounds with then-welterweight champion Pipino Cuevas, pictured knocking out Clyde Gray in 1977. The hard-hitting Cuevas left the ring very impressed, supposedly muttering under his breath, "Incredible."



Ayala faced potential trouble at age 15, when he was convicted of aggravated assault against a woman. When the victim asked the judge for leniency in exchange for a monetary settlement, Ayala was given 10 years probation instead.

drag raced them outside town. A fast car is on Ayala's list of life's essentials.

A fast crowd did not help Ayala at the raw age of 15. As part of a drunken group, he was thrown into a public rest room, slapped around a girl, and was arrested on a charge of rape, later reduced to aggravated assault. The woman hired a well-connected attorney who was savvy to Ayala's earning potential. Ayala was convicted and given a 10-year sentence, but in a retrial, the woman asked the judge to go easy on Ayala. The court gave him 10 years probation, but Ayala was stuck paying off a large settlement. Much of the earnings from his first year-and-a-half as a pro went toward the settlement.

"I got drunk and did something crazy," said Ayala. "There is much that I learned from that time in my life."

Torito's conviction came hard on the heels of Mike's for shooting a man with whom he had a long-standing quarrel. Mike got 10 years probation, developed a drug habit, and lost by a 15th-round knockout to Danny Lopez in a featherweight title bout in 1979. Tony Sr. disowned Mike for two years, but they are reconciled now. Mike is trained by his father and is currently THE RING's number-two ranked junior featherweight.

Not long after his conviction, Torito met Lisa Paez, a tall, dark-eyed girl to whom he is devoted. They share a room in his parents' house and plan to be married. "Living together, that's the new thing," said Pauline. "But they're good together. Lisa wants a big wedding, so they're waiting until they can afford it."

In 1980, Ayala signed to be managed by Lou Duva and Shelly Finkel, who have many of the top fighters in New Jersey, and to be promoted by Bob Arum's Top Rank. Duva, Finkel, and Arum began moving Ayala slowly through the ranks, arranging steady television exposure for him. He did not disappoint them, building a 14-0 record with 12 knockouts.

Pauline Ayala knew nothing about boxing when she married. Now she knows. Once, when her husband was out of town with some boxers, she got a call from a tournament organizer somewhere else. With Souza's wife, she piled some kids into a car, went to the tournament, and worked the corner for her team.

Now she knows boxing. "As a mother, I see something splendid inside of my sons that explodes as they fight," she said. "I see a different side of them."

Tony Ayala Sr., speaking at the gym, described Torito similarly.

"There are two sides to Torito," said the father. "When he performs, he must perform like an athlete full of fire and determination. But when he's home, he jokes and plays like any other 18-year-old. Like when he's with his girl on a Sunday afternoon."

Torito is also prone to lying on the couch for hours on end, speaking to no one, watching afternoon soap operas. "I call him 'Moody,'" said Pauline.

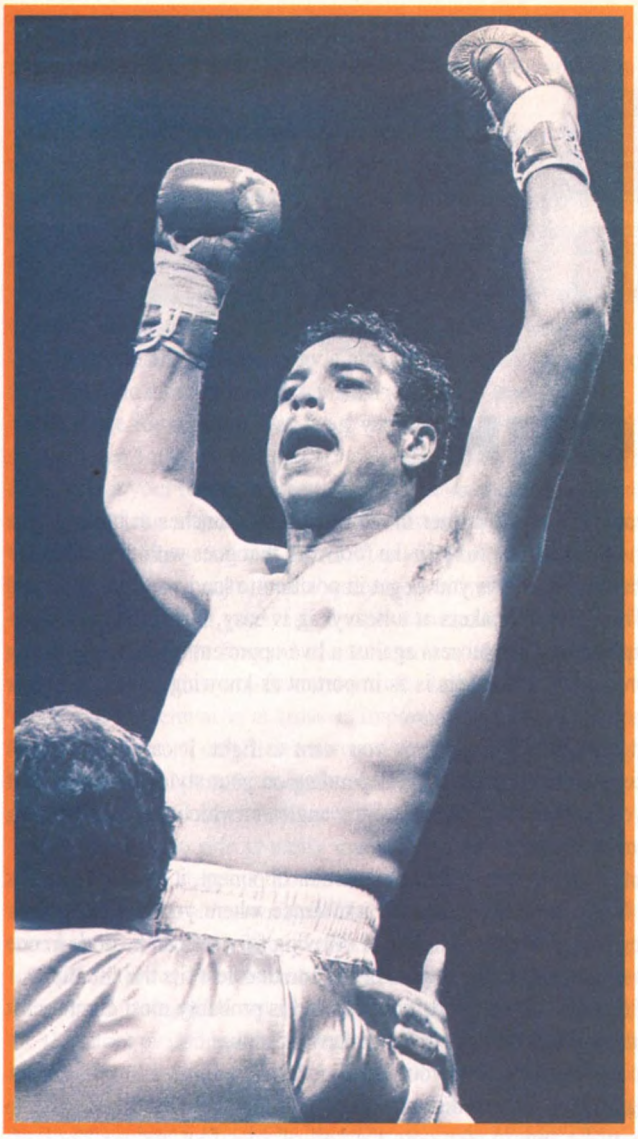
In the ring, the burning fire, the hot lava that flows in Torito, has never cooled off. The father is not afraid to turn him loose now. He is waiting for the right moment to fight for a title. The WBA 154-pound title may be his target.

"We may be just a few fights away," said Tony Sr. "But I think it'll come in 1982. If we fight Tony for a title now, how much could he get? But if we improve his record, his defense, and his all-around performance, then we can deal for more money.

"I feel he can beat any of the top contenders now. He could wipe out Rocky Fratto and Tidashi Mihara [who recently fought for the vacant WBA title] on the same night."

If all proceeds according to plan, Ayala will be a middleweight by 1983. It is not farfetched to foresee Ayala fighting for Marvin Hagler's title.

Ayala was in rare company in 1980, considered among the best young fighters in the world along with up-and-comers like Alex Ramos, Bobby Czyz, and Johnny Bumphus. In his first 15 months as a pro, Ayala built a 14-0 (12) record and was promoted by Bob Arum's Top Rank.



At 18, Ayala had plenty of reasons to raise his hands to the sky, because at the time, the sky seemed to be the limit for Torito. "When I'm a millionaire, I won't have to get up early no more," Ayala said. "Boxing is a short career, but it pays off damn good. I'm set for life."

"That's very, very exciting just to think of," said Ayala Sr. "Hagler is a tremendous champion. He boxes and he punches good. But what if Torito nails this guy, or gets in and starts working on his body? It would make even Hagler think twice. Torito is made for that fight."

At 18, Ayala Jr.'s future is as bright as the Texas sky. At 18, the sky is the limit.

"There really is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," said Torito. "When I'm a millionaire, I won't have to get up early no more. Boxing is a short career, but it pays off damn good. I'm set for life. I've got a pension where I'll be paid the rest of my life after I'm 30.

"But I don't like to be called no million-dollar baby. My brother Mike does that; I don't know why. He got that from some Alice Cooper song. To me, I'm just a homegrown kid. After my boxing career, I plan to go back and be a normal guy. When I quit fighting, that'll be it. When I retire the first time, that'll be the last time you hear of Tony Ayala and Torito." ■

THE RING, January 1982

The Cover: Thomas Hearns spoke candidly in an exclusive interview with THE RING about suffering his first professional defeat in his memorable battle against Sugar Ray Leonard in 1981. "Everybody wants to go back, go back," Hearns said. "I want to go forward. I don't want to go back."

Greetings From Tex: One of boxing's most colorful competitors was Randall "Tex" Cobb. When Cobb wasn't hidden away training for a fight, fans could often catch the likable part-time actor zinging one-liners at Doc Watson's Pub in Philadelphia.

A Return To Cleveland: Bombastic promoter Don King brought boxing back to Cleveland in emphatic style, with Aaron Pryor's third defense of the WBA junior welterweight title, against Dujuan Johnson. Pryor came off the floor to retain the title by seventh-round knockout.

Underrated Champ: Was Gene Tunney underrated? Tunney may have been robbed of his rightful place in boxing lore because of one crucial mistake: He twice defeated Jack Dempsey, then the most popular heavyweight champion the world had ever known. The public never quite forgave Tunney.

Fighter Of The Month: Roger Stafford went into his fight against former WBA welterweight champion Pipino Cuevas as a decided underdog. Stafford exited with his arms raised after scoring an upset over the once-invincible Mexican. Stafford knocked Cuevas down in the second round en route to a unanimous 10-round decision.

THE A, B, C & DEAS OF BOXING

FOOTWORK

By Tommy Deas

You've watched the world's best fighters and read about them in this magazine, and now you want to give boxing a try, or at least learn a little more about the mechanics of the sport. Welcome to THE RING'S bi-monthly instructional feature on boxing's basics. Bear in mind, the techniques described here are just one of many approaches to the Sweet Science. The most important thing is to find a good coach and follow his instructions. All instructions on these pages are geared for an orthodox, or right-handed, stance. If you are left-handed, merely turn everything around.

Our previous three installments gave you a primer in the three basic punches in boxing—the jab, the cross, and the hook. Now it's time to learn the footwork that goes with the fisticuffs.

Footwork is important because it allows you to get in position to land your punches, and to avoid those of your opponent. Throwing haymakers at a heavybag is easy, but without the footwork you will have a tough time duplicating your success against a live opponent. Watch any boxing match and you will discover that proper use of the legs is as important as knowing how to use your fists.

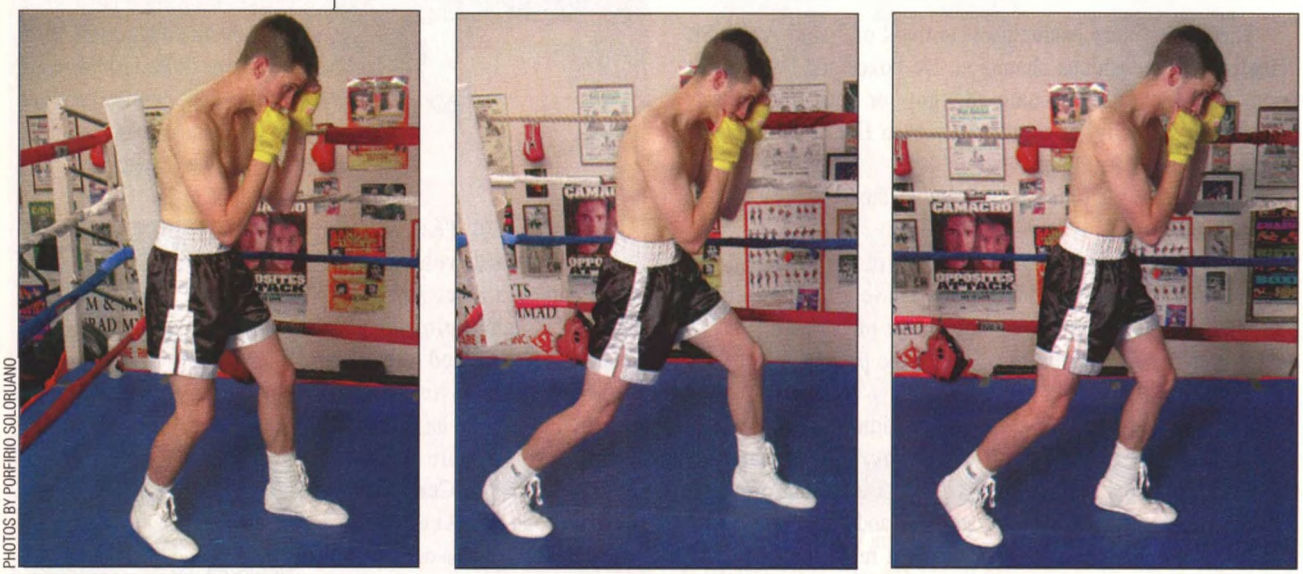
Mastering footwork allows you to fight when and how you want to fight. It can help you get inside to pressure an opponent or keep him at arm's length, depending on your style and strategy. If you control the distance between you and your opponent and the angles at which the bout is being fought, you can control terms of combat.

Once you determine the best distance to utilize against a particular opponent, it is your footwork that will allow you to maintain it. If you can keep a fight at a distance where you can reach your opponent and he has trouble reaching you, the battle is half over. Moving forward can be done in one of two ways. Choose the one that is most comfortable to you, or the one that best fits the situation.

The first way involves stepping forward with the left foot first, and is probably most common. It is best utilized when moving forward behind the jab, or to set up the left hook.

To move forward, start with the basic stance. Step your left foot forward about 12 to 18 inches, depending on the length of your legs, a comfortable distance that doesn't spread your legs apart too far. When you set your foot down, make sure to step onto the ball of your foot and not the heel. Stepping heel-first makes a fighter vulnerable to an off-balance knockdown, and also leaves him out of position to throw his own punch.

Once the left foot sets down firmly on the canvas, slide your right foot across the canvas back



PHOTOS BY PORFIRIO SOLORIANO

Amateur light middleweight Dan Watson demonstrates the correct way to move forward in the ring. Note that he's back in his basic stance after advancing a step.

under you until it's almost under your right shoulder, so you are back in a basic boxing stance. It's as simple as that.

The right foot should maintain contact with the canvas so you are never standing on one pin, because that makes it easier for your foe to knock you down. Let the foot glide across the floor as you move it. Once it is in place, you are prepared to take another step forward.

The other way of moving forward involves what might be called a "cheat step" with the right foot. It is best for sneaking in a little closer to an opponent who is already almost within reach, or to gain a little more ground to launch a right-hand lead.

To move forward this way, start with the basic stance and take a small step forward, perhaps six or eight inches, with the right foot, so that your feet are closer together. As soon as the right foot sets down, take a quick, longer step forward with the left foot. Once the left foot sets down (again, always on the ball of the foot), you will find your right foot already in position to immediately launch your punch. If you want to move forward a little more, you cheat your right foot forward again as soon as the left foot lands and then take another step forward with the left foot.

Lateral movement is at least as important as forward motion. The boxer who can only move forward can only fight in a straight line, as a train on a track, and will ultimately be out-flanked by an opponent who can effectively move side to side.

Moving side to side is pretty much the same no matter which direction you are stepping. To move to the left, start with the basic stance and take a sideways step with your left foot first, making sure to keep it properly distanced in front of the right foot (the left foot should always be forward, closer to the opponent) throughout the stepping motion. As soon as the ball of the left foot lands, slide the right foot over along the canvas until it is back under you again in your boxing stance. Longer steps allow you to cover more ground, and the speed with which you put one step after the other dictates the speed with which you glide across the canvas.

Moving to the right is basically the opposite. You step first to the right with your right foot, taking care not to also move it forward where it lands even with the left foot. It should always stay behind you, a little wider than shoulder length apart from the left. As soon as the right foot settles on the canvas, slide the left foot over until it is back in place and you are back in your stance.

The most common mistake most inexperienced boxers make in moving side to side is to cross-step, stepping one foot over the other, especially when moving to the right. If you try to move to the right and step over with your left foot first, your legs will cross. It doesn't take much imagination to figure out where you are going to end up if your opponent lands a punch while you are in this position—on the floor. Cross-stepping is akin to tripping yourself up, making you vulnerable to any assault. Try it and you'll also find that it's impossible to launch an effective punch of your own while doing this.

The basic rule of side-to-side movement is to always step first with the foot that is closest to the direction you wish to move—left foot first when stepping left, right foot first when stepping right.

When moving laterally, you always want to choose a circular path rather than an arrow-straight route. Because the ring is square, you must curve your path as you get closer to the ropes if you wish to avoid running into them and putting yourself in a vulnerable position.

You will notice that this lesson does not include any instruction for how to move backward. The reason for this is simple. Stand anywhere you choose in a boxing ring and look behind you. What do you see? No matter where you are, the ropes or a corner are always directly behind you. Never move straight back in a boxing ring, or that is where you will end up. If you move at angles, you can keep your back off the ropes and keep from giving your opponent a big advantage.

Practice your footwork one step at a time at first, doing a few rounds of forward movement and a few rounds of side-to-side movement each day. Start in slow motion, paying careful attention to your technique, then pick up your speed as you go. Every step you take your whole life conditions the muscles needed for moving forward, but the muscles used for side-to-side motion will need to be built up to equal strength. You will need to work them more to get them in shape, and including some sideways movement in your roadwork is probably a good idea to help with this.

Up next: The uppercut. ■

The two most important things to remember when using lateral movement are to lead with the foot closest to the direction you're heading and not to cross your legs.

Tommy Deas is a sports-writer for the Tuscaloosa [Alabama] News and a trainer of professional and amateur boxers.

COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

DANDIES DENIED

William Dettloff did an excellent job comparing Lennox Lewis to the all-time greats in your June 2001 issue. I equally enjoyed "The 10 Rematches We'd Most Like To See." Consequently, I compiled a list of bouts we should have seen over the years but didn't, as well as return bouts we never saw.

The bouts we should've seen but didn't: Joe Frazier-Ken Norton, Evander Holyfield-Michael Spinks, Jeff Chandler-Lupe Pintor, Carlos Palomino-Pipino Cuevas, Aaron Pryor-Roberto Duran, and Eusebio Pedroza-Salvador Sanchez.

As for the return bouts: George Foreman-Muhammad Ali, Larry Holmes-Ken Norton, Mike Tyson-Buster Douglas, Sugar Ray Leonard-Wilfred Benitez, and Leonard-Marvin Hagler.

KURTIS C. WOLF
Glendale, AZ

EXCUSING OSCAR

I wish to apologize to the media for keeping Oscar De La Hoya from his postfight press conference after his fight with Arturo Gatti.

As winners of his fan contest, myself and another lucky fan had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet him. Oscar was nice enough to have photos taken with his fans and autograph my fight ticket and program. I overheard several members of the press complaining that Oscar kept them waiting so long. Again, I apologize, but this memory I will cherish forever.

I cannot, however, say my encounter with Sugar Shane Mosley was so sweet. He requested that a security guard be posted around him so that no photos could be taken of him at the fight. This is *not* how you *get* or *keep* fans. This, I assure you, Sugar.

The media may have thought Oscar was playing prima donna, but that title belongs to Shane Mosley. It was a real turnoff to see Mosley acting like an untouchable. Don't get too comfy on that pedestal, Shane, you could get knocked off of it!

JULIE GRIFFIN
Cincinnati, OH

Oscar De La Hoya took some time for a few of his fans after beating Arturo Gatti, including contest winner Julie Griffin (blue dress). Ms. Griffin's encounter with Shane Mosley wasn't as pleasant.

APOSTOLI THE APOSTLE

I agree with reader Steven Madsen's assertion that Fred Apostoli was certainly overlooked when he was not included in the all-time top 20 middleweights in the January 2001 issue of THE RING. My father, Billy Conn, fought 12 world champions, including Joe Louis twice. He always considered his two fights against Apostoli as the toughest

of his career and considered him the best all-around fighter he ever faced. He was the only person my father ever requested an autograph from! He rated him in the top 10.

TIM CONN
Pittsburgh, PA

STYLIN' OSCAR

I was very impressed by Oscar De La Hoya's new style. Not only did he add more foot and head movement, but he's throwing his right hand more. Oscar also seems to mesh well with his new trainer, Floyd Mayweather Sr. I think this is the perfect formula for beating Shane Mosley in a rematch. If De La Hoya and Sugar Shane fight again, it will be a different story. With all the new weapons Oscar has added to his arsenal, Shane won't stand a chance.

MARICELLA VARGAS
Salaman States, NM

BRAVO, ARTURO

I just watched the Arturo Gatti-Oscar De La Hoya fight, and the hero has indeed returned. Only the hero is Arturo "Thunder" Gatti, not "The Golden Boy" Oscar De La Hoya. I have never seen a fighter with more guts, bravery, and determination than the kid from Jersey City, New Jersey. If there were more boxers who fought and displayed class like Gatti, the sport would not be in nearly as bad shape as it is.

KEVIN POORMAN
Severna Park, MD

BRILLIANT BARRERA

What a tremendous performance from Marco Antonio Barrera to finally expose that overrated, overhyped clown, Naseem Hamed. Like everyone else, I was thoroughly impressed by Barrera's change in style to give Hamed a complete boxing lesson. Hamed's performance was an embarrassment because he has no boxing skills whatsoever, no balance, no coordination, no anything. And where was his so-called power?

Throughout the fight, it was clear that Barrera was by far the heavier hitter, and he was the physically stronger of the two. If they have a rematch, I just can't see a way for Hamed to win. What can he do differently?

My favorite moment of the fight came in the 11th round when Barrera started to really go after Hamed, and Hamed was running away from him like the coward that he is.

MARTIN LODGE
Wakefield, England

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Apparently, not all English boxing fans love flamboyant featherweight Prince Naseem Hamed. British reader Martin Lodge was delighted by Marco Antonio Barrera's winning performance against Naz, and doesn't see any way that Hamed could win a rematch.

IT'S OVER, EVANDER!

Many boxing experts have been saying it for years, but I did not agree with them until now: It's time for Evander Holyfield to retire! Watching him struggle and eventually lose to a common fighter like John Ruiz was almost too gut-wrenching to watch. I was too young to see Muhammad Ali lose to Trevor Berbick, but I now know how his fans must have felt. Fighters like Berbick and Ruiz aren't worthy of laying claim to even the smallest portion of the heavyweight crown.

I will give Ruiz some credit. He showed a true fighter's heart, but we should keep it in perspective. The fact of the matter is that this fight was a life-or-death type struggle with a fighter who was only a shadow of his former self. I fear that reality will hit Ruiz the next time he steps in with a real top-10 fighter. He might not exit in 19 seconds, but the end will come—and fairly quickly.

As for Holyfield, his end has clearly come already. Jim Gray hit the nail on the head when he suggested that Ruiz would have only been a sparring partner for Holyfield in his prime.

SCOTT MERIDETH
Auburn, WA ■

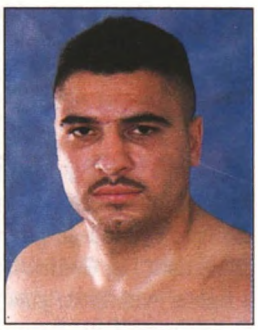
Watching scenes like this made reader Scott Merideth come to the conclusion that it's time for Evander Holyfield to retire. "Many boxing experts have been saying it for years, but I did not agree with them until now," writes Merideth.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

DON'T TELL RUIZ THAT HOLYFIELD'S SHOT

For the longest time, we refused to count **Evander Holyfield** out. He was "The Holy Warrior," a proven miracle worker, an ageless wonder. Then came his loss to **John Ruiz** in March, in which Holyfield was nearly knocked out in the 11th round and went on to lose a unanimous decision. Finally, it seemed, the miracles could no longer be worked; this wonder had clearly aged.



Ruiz: Ready for the rubber match

Every week since, letters have been pouring into THE RING's editorial offices begging the 38-year-old "Real Deal" to retire. Everyone seems to know it's over for Holyfield. Everyone except Holyfield ... and Ruiz.

"I'll never count Evander Holyfield out," said Ruiz in mid-May, shortly before entering training camp to prepare for his rubber match with Holyfield. "He has a lot of heart, that's what made him a great fighter. People count people out, but you never know with Holyfield. I've just gotta be ready."

In the wake of what happened to **Lennox Lewis** against **Hasim Rahman**, you can't blame WBA titlist Ruiz for preparing as though he's facing a prime-time Holyfield. It's better to take an opponent a little too seriously than not seriously enough. In fact, according to the early odds, Ruiz' attitude is just right, as Holyfield has been posted as an even-money bet to win. At first glance, that seems absurd considering what happened in the last two rounds of Ruiz-Holyfield II, but "The Quiet Man" isn't the least bit surprised.

"If I was a favorite, there would be something wrong," Ruiz said. "I've been an underdog all my life. Why should that change now? Everyone is so used to putting me down, and I know it takes a while to change their minds. It doesn't happen overnight. My goal is to knock Holyfield out this time, because that would make a big statement and would go a long way toward getting me respect."

Ruiz-Holyfield III will take place on August 5 in Beijing, China. Which network will broadcast the fight—on the night of August 4, incidentally, due to the time-zone difference—had not yet been determined as of press time.

LISTEN UP

It's strange to think that a boxer can be easing his way back into action and fighting for a world title at the same time, but that's precisely the case for **Fernando Vargas** in his next bout. After struggling against **Wilfredo Rivera**, "Ferocious Fernando" will face a softer touch in **Jose "Shibata" Flores** for the vacant WBA 154-pound title. That fight is tentatively planned for September ... If **Hector Camacho Jr.** gets by **Jesse James Leija**, he has his sights set on a high-profile fight with **Arturo Gatti** next. It should be interesting to see whether Camacho will find a way to make Gatti boring ... The lineup for the first broadcast of *ShowBox*, the new Showtime boxing series spotlighting lesser-known prospects, was being finalized as we went to press. The date is July 21, probably in Atlantic City, and the main event will be a 10-round lightweight bout between 17-0 **Martin O'Malley** and 17-0 **Leonard Dorin** ... Here's some good news: Light heavyweight contender **Eric Harding**, whose career was thought to be in serious jeopardy after he tore his biceps muscle against **Roy Jones**, is scheduled to return to the ring on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* on June 29. Harding will take on journeyman **Demetrius Jenkins** ... Top heavyweight **Wladimir Klitschko** will box in the co-feature on the August 4 **Bones Adams-Paulie Ayala** show. Opponents being considered as of press time were **Frans Botha** and **Charles Shufford** ... THE RING's number-one super middleweight, **Joe Calzaghe**, is expected to fight in the U.S. for the first time on July 21. One possible opponent is two-time WBA champion **Byron Mitchell**, which wouldn't be a bad test at all for the Welshman ... In other super middleweight news, the WBC title, of which **Davey Hilton** was stripped in early-May, will be up for grabs on July 28, when **Glenn Catley** battles **Eric Lucas** in England. The pair met once before, with Catley winning by 12th-round knockout in December '99. ■

Camacho Jr.: Might get Gatti

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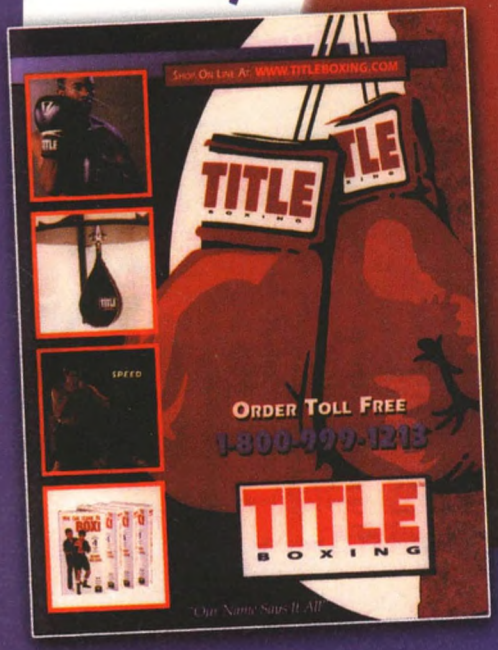

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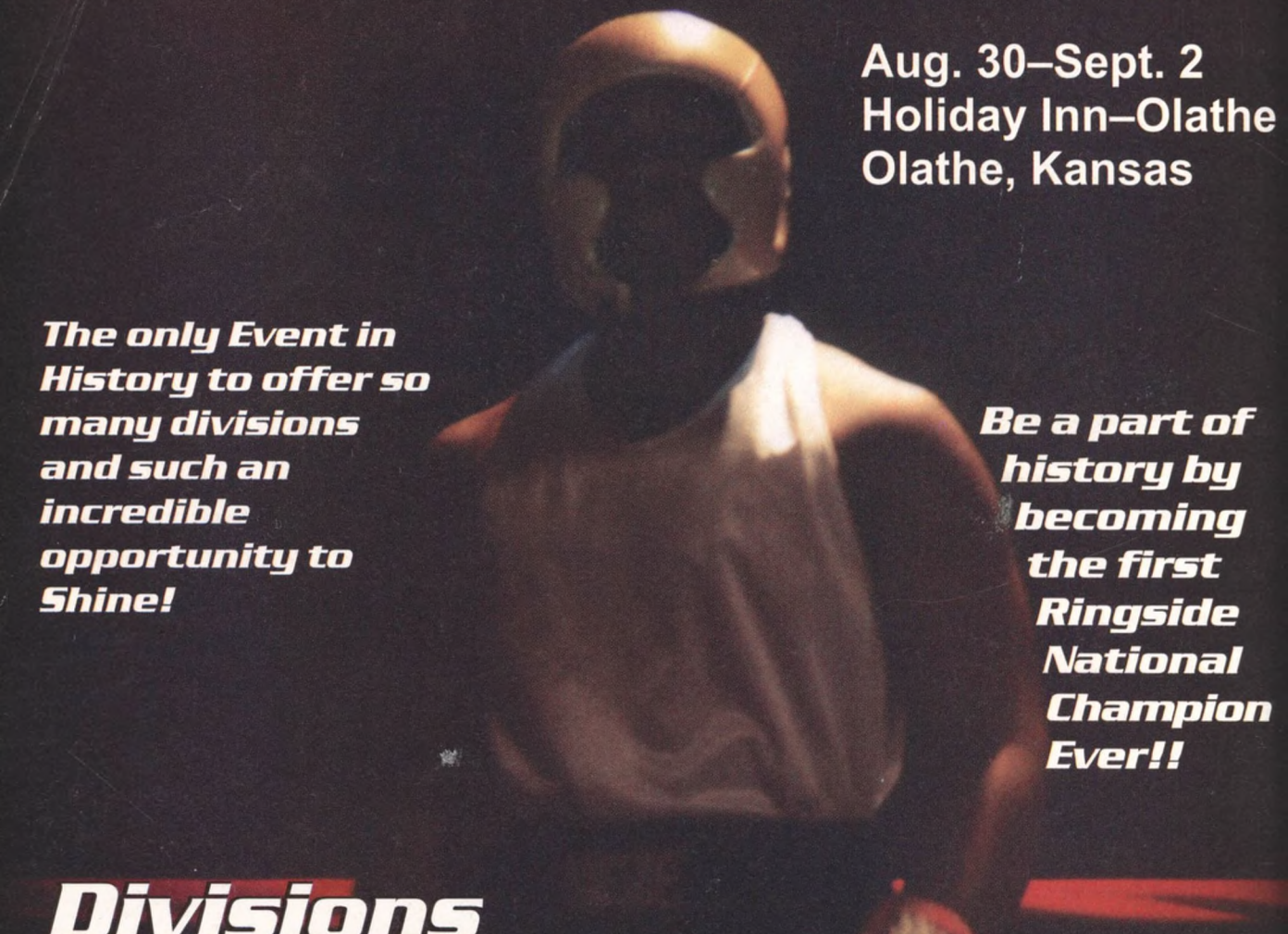

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